



THE HOLOCAUST IN THE SOVIET UNION

Yitzhak Arad

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YITZHAK ARAD

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Preface

This book covers the borders of the Soviet Union as they were on June 22, 1941, the day on which Germany attacked the USSR. These areas include the Soviet Republics: Belorussia, Ukraine, and parts of the Federative Republic of Russia occupied by the German army, which up until September 17, 1939, were part of the Soviet Union and the territories annexed by the USSR during 1939–40, the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; parts of former Poland—west Belorussia and west Ukraine; and Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which were formerly a part of Romania. Until the German occupation, these territories were home to between 4.1 and 4.2 million Jews—half of them in the old territories and half in the annexed territories.

This study is based on German, Soviet, and Jewish archival sources. Up to the late 1980s and early 1990s, most of the archival material available to researchers was German. It consisted mainly of reports of the Einsatzgruppen, Nazi war criminal trials, reports and orders issued by the German military administration, orders and directives issued by Third Reich Nazi leadership and the German army high command, documentation of the German civilian administration in the occupied territories, testimonials, and memoirs. Included in these documents is correspondence between various German authorities regarding their policies toward the Jews.

But what made this study possible to carry out and to include all of the important subjects, without leaving “White Stains,” was the use of all the available material from Soviet archives opened in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This included the extensive documentation collected by the Special State Commission for Determining and Investigating the War Crimes Committed by the Fascist-German Occupiers in the Temporarily Occupied Soviet Territories.

The documents of this special commission yielded records of events during the German occupation of most of the cities and townships in these regions. Researchers could also study documents kept in the Communist Party archives, the Soviet partisans’ movement, the Soviet military archives, from trials of war criminals that took place in the Soviet Union, and to some extent documents in the KGB archives.

At first, much of the material from Jewish sources consisted of survivors’ testimonies, diaries, memoirs, local or regional monographs, and some underground ghetto archives, mostly from the annexed territories in 1939–40. The dissolution

of the Soviet Union has made it possible to receive additional archival material from Jewish sources, such as that from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Local Jewish initiative in the former Soviet Union resulted in the collection and publication of many Holocaust testimonials in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Russia. Many Holocaust testimonies have also been collected from Soviet immigrants who came to Israel during the past decade.

The rich and varied basis provided by all the aforementioned sources is what made possible this comprehensive study of the Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The detailed description of events during the Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union in this study is preceded by the history of the Jews in these territories before the Holocaust.

The Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union is described here both chronologically and geographically. The German occupation lasted for various lengths of time—from several months in the region around the foothills of the Caucasian Mountains to four years in western Latvia. But with the exception of western Latvia, it is possible to confine the time of occupation from the summer of 1941 until the summer of 1944, when the last of the areas of Lithuania, Estonia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and Bessarabia were liberated by the Soviet army.

Murder of Jews in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union continued throughout the period of occupation, but there were times when the murders peaked and other times when they declined, as a result of various circumstances that are detailed in the body of the study. The study is divided into three periods:

First period: from the beginning of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union until the winter of 1941–42, during which most of the Jews of the Baltic states and the old territories of the Soviet Union were annihilated.

Second period: from the spring of 1942 and up to the German defeat in Stalingrad late in 1942, during which the Jews of west Belorussia, west Ukraine, and regions of southern Russia captured by the Germans during the summer and autumn of 1942 were annihilated.

Third period: from early 1943 until the German withdrawal in the summer and fall of 1944, during which the last Jews remaining in the ghettos and the camps were annihilated.

The murder of Jews is described in each of the chronological periods, in accordance with the administrative divisions made by the Germans in the occupied territories of Soviet Union:

Areas of German civilian administration, which included the more western occupied territories: Reichskommissariat Ostland and Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

Areas of German military administration, which included areas closer to the front line: the subdivision of these areas conformed with the areas under the control of the German “North,” “Center,” and “South” army groups.

Areas of eastern Galicia, which were annexed to General Government of Poland.

Areas under Romanian control: Transnistria (part of Ukraine between the rivers Dnestr and Bug), Bessarabia, and northern Bukovina.

This study focuses on the following subjects:

The characteristics of the Soviet Jews on the eve of the Holocaust.

The ideological roots and practical preparations in Germany for the annihilation of the Soviet Jews.

German administration in the occupied territories and their anti-Jewish policy: the SS, the army, and the civilian administration.

The extermination process and its uniqueness in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Jews and their confrontation and reactions to the atrocities.

The involvement of the German army and the military administration in anti-Jewish policies and acts of annihilation.

The involvement of the German civil administration and its responsibility of anti-Jewish policies.

The role and participation of local collaborators—civilians and police—in the persecution and murder of Jews.

Attitudes of the local populations toward the annihilation of their Jewish neighbors.

Effects of the situation on the front line and partisan warfare on the timing of the murder of Jews.

German policies toward mixed marriages and Mischlinge, toward the Karaites, the Krimchaks, the Mountain Jews, and Soviet Jewish prisoners of war.

The Jewish armed resistance in the ghettos and partisan groups in the forests.

These are the guidelines according to which this study deals with events in the various localities:

1. For large Jewish communities, such as those in Vilnius, Kaunas, Minsk, and Lvov, in which ghettos had existed for several years, the events there are given a more detailed description in this book. Cities such as Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Kishiniev, whose large Jewish communities were annihilated at the start of the occupation, are given a more limited review.
2. Events in the Jewish communities numbering above 5,000 which are not included among the larger communities are given brief mention in this study. Some of the smaller communities are mentioned in the notes. Emphasis is given in this study to the small Jewish communities in some larger cities, such as Kursk, Oriol, Krasnodar, and Stalingrad, about whom little has so far been written in Holocaust research and literature. The Jewish agricultural settlements (*kolkhoz*) in the former Soviet Union provided a wide-scale phenomenon. Almost all of them were located in the German-occupied territories, and their fate is described at length.
3. Large and small towns in which armed resistance took place are discussed in the relevant chapters.
4. The number of Jewish Holocaust victims in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union is estimated.

The objective of this study has been to supply the reader with a description of the Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, alongside an analysis of the elements that affected the events.

THE
HOL°CAUST
IN THE
SOVIET
UNION



OCCUPIED SOVIET TERRITORY, DECEMBER 1941

ONE

The Jews of Russia
and the Soviet Union
before World War II

I

Jews in Czarist Russia

ASSIMILATION, PERSECUTION, AND EMIGRATION

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the world's largest concentration of Jews lived between the banks of the Vistula River to the west and the river Dnepr to the east, in the kingdom of Poland. According to various estimates, this Jewish population numbered over 1 million people. There were virtually no Jews at that time in the area east of Poland, in the Russian empire. Some tens of thousands of Jews who had lived there, mainly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, had recently been expelled. As a result of political unrest and internal struggles during the years 1772–95 between the king and the country's aristocracy, the Polish kingdom was divided among its three neighbors—Russia, Prussia, and Austria—and ceased to exist. As part of these divisions, the provinces of Belorussia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia were annexed to Russia.

For generations, these regions had been home to many thousands of Jews. Russia, whose policies prohibited Jews from living in its confines, now found itself in control of a large Jewish community. These Jews filled important roles in local and interregional commerce. Because of their number and economic importance, it was no longer possible to expel them.

Russian empress Catherine the Great (1762–96) legislated several laws that allowed the Jews to continue living in the annexed territories, although they were forbidden to settle in other parts of Russia. The scope of this settlement was defined in a directive issued by Catherine the Great on December 23, 1791.¹ This area, where the Jews were permitted to live, known as the Pale of Settlement, was expanded in 1804 to include the southern Ukraine on the banks of the Black Sea and the Crimean peninsula. Russia had captured these sparsely populated territories from the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the eighteenth century and was interested in developing them. During the nineteenth century, thousands of Jews relocated to these areas, and the large Jewish communities of Odessa and other cities were established in southern Russia. Bessarabia, formerly a part of the principality of Moldavia, was annexed to Russia in 1812 and was

included in the Jewish Pale of Settlement. At the Congress of Vienna, following the fall of Napoleon, areas of central Poland, including the city of Warsaw with its large Jewish population, were incorporated as a separate kingdom under the Russian emperors' sovereignty.

Demography

During the nineteenth century the people of Russia, especially the Jews among them, underwent a demographic revolution. It was a period of natural growth that followed improvements in health services and a general rise in standards of education. The first general population census to be conducted in Russia, in 1897, included 5,189,400 Jews, constituting 4 percent of the country's population.² Following the persecutions and pogroms and the harsh economic situation, some 1,850,000 Jews left Russia during the period between the 1880s and the outbreak of World War I.³ In spite of this mass migration, their numbers did not decrease, owing to the high birthrate of Russia's remaining Jews. On the eve of World War I, Russia's Jewish numbered some 5,200,000.⁴

Government Policy: Reinforcing Assimilatory Trends

The government authorities in Russia were concerned by the ever-growing Jewish population and considered them a threat to the country. Most of the Jews were urban dwellers who jealously guarded their religion and customs; they lived in well-organized communities and were occupied mainly as traders, shopkeepers, and artisans. The authorities were not prepared to grant the Jews equal rights, and the process of emancipation of the Jews in central and west Europe in the nineteenth century skipped over the Jews of Russia.

Czar Alexander I (1801–25), who at the beginning of his reign adopted the policies of an enlightened leader, appointed a committee in December 1802 to examine the Jewish situation. In December 1804, the committee published its recommendations in the form of “Laws for Jews,” the main objective being to force the Jews to assimilate into their non-Jewish surrounds. The laws encouraged the Jews to introduce changes in their traditional sources of income and direct them toward more productive professions. One of the plans to “reform” the Jews made it possible for Jewish children to be admitted into state-run schools and universities. The objective behind this was assimilatory, since the atmosphere in these institutions was orthodox Christian.

Czar Nicholas I (1825–55) legislated dozens of new laws aimed at solving the problem by oppressing the Jews and forcing them to assimilate. One of the laws was forced military service—a tragic event in the history of Russia's Jews, known as the “Cantonist Laws.” On August 26, 1827, a law was passed imposing upon

Jewish males the duty of military service. Recruitment age at that time was 18 to 35, and young men were required to serve in the army for 25 years. Service conditions were harsh for everyone, but the Jews were forced to suffer conditions that were especially brutal. Based on the premise that Jews were not accustomed to military service, the minimum age for recruiting Jewish soldiers was dropped from 18 to 12. Recruits under the age of 18 were sent to special institutions that were known as Schools for Cantonists—thus the name “Cantonist Laws.” Of the 70,000 Jewish youngsters recruited according to the Cantonist Laws, 50,000 were under 18.⁵

The objective in recruiting Jewish youngsters was to sever them from their Jewish environment and to transfer them to regions beyond the Jewish Pale of Settlement, in the hope that military service in an atmosphere and spirit of the Russian Orthodox Church, coupled with plenty of physical and emotional pressure, would induce the young men to assimilate and convert to Christianity. In order to force them to adopt Christianity, they were sent on long marches, they were beaten and starved, and entire companies were brought to churches where they underwent organized baptism. There were many cases of martyrdom and suicides in order to avoid baptism, but over half of the 70,000 Cantonists were forced to become Christians.⁶ In the end, however, the regime’s recruitment policies were of no use. Those of the Cantonists who did change their religion did not come back as Jewish community leaders; rather, they disassociated themselves from mainstream Jewish life and were assimilated into their new Christian environment.

On August 26, 1856, the hated Cantonist system was repealed. The military reforms of 1874, which determined a compulsory period of four years of military service for all young Russian men, was enforced also on the Jews.⁷

The reactionary turn in the policies of Czar Alexander II (1855–81) brought about a growing wave of terrorism, and on March 1, 1881, he was assassinated by members of *Narodnaia Volla* (the wish of the people), a socialist organization that supported a peasant-led revolution and believed that the way to achieve its goals lay in the use of terror.⁸

Persecution and Pogroms

The rise of Alexander III (1881–94) heralded the beginning of the worst period in the history of Russia’s Jews. As a result of the Russian people’s growing opposition to the autocratic regime, the government decided to take advantage of the people’s inherent hatred for the Jews and use it as a basis for policies that would make the masses forget their fury at the government. There followed a wave of pogroms, organized by government authorities, reactionary organizations, and the secret police.

The government spread rumors that the Jews were leading the revolutionary waves that were washing over Russia and that the Jews were responsible for the assassination of Alexander II. The pogroms began on April 15, 1881, in Elizavetgrad and spread to Kiev, Odessa, and other cities in the Ukraine and several other places throughout Russia. The spring/summer 1881 pogroms affected about 215 Jewish communities.⁹ The violence continued on and off until 1884 and focused mainly on Ukraine, traditionally a stronghold of anti-Semitic riots and disturbances.¹⁰

On May 5, 1882, the Russian government published a new list of rules that prevented Jews from working on Sundays and on Christian holidays. Other laws included restrictions on employing Jews in the civil service. Jews were barred from becoming army officers. Schools and universities operated a quota system—or *numerus clausus*—limiting the number of Jews admitted to each institution. This was a deviation from previous policy, which aimed at including Jews in the general education system in order to induce them to assimilate.¹¹ In 1891 some 20,000 Jewish artisans were expelled from Moscow. They had been allowed to live there during the previous czar's reign and made up the majority of Moscow's Jewish population. The reason given for the expulsion was "to purge the holy capital of Jews."¹²

Nicholas II (1894–1917), the last of the Russian czars, was under the absolute influence of reactionary circles in the royal court. Unrest and dissidence against the czar's rule were growing among the population. Liberal and revolutionary groups began forming and demanding reforms in the country's government. Like his predecessors, the czar blamed the Jews for the people's unrest and accused them of being responsible for Russia's poverty and shortcomings. Anti-Semitic propaganda and incitement of the masses to anti-Jewish violence became a political tool of the government.¹³

The authorities adopted the old method of blood libel. At the beginning of 1903, the ravaged body of a Christian boy was found in Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia. The boy's uncle confessed to the murder. But, encouraged by the authorities, a local paper accused the Jews of the "ritual slaughter" of the boy and called for revenge. On Sunday, April 6, 1903, an organized and incited mob set out on a rampage of murder and robbery. The Kishinev pogrom aroused a wave of protest around the world, and heads of state protested to the czar. Russian intellectuals also protested against the riots. The protests did nothing to change the government's policies, and in 1903 further pogroms were organized under the auspices of the government in Gomel, Mogilev, and other cities in the Ukraine and Belorussia.

The Russo-Japanese war broke out at the beginning of 1904, and Russia's

failure at the front reinforced the revolutionary movement in the country. In order to combat the growing revolutionary tendencies, the regime established an organization called “Union of the Russian Nation,” as well as groups of hooligans, the “Black Hundreds,” who were sent to fight the revolutionaries and the Jews. The anti-Semitic press accused the Jews of supporting Japan and of distributing revolutionary propaganda in order to weaken Russia, ignoring the fact that 30,000 Jewish soldiers were fighting at that very time on the front against Japan.¹⁴

In answer to the unrest and demonstrations of the workers, the czar promised the nation a constitution and a legislative assembly (called Duma). But the revolutionary wave continued, and members of the Union of the Russian Nation and the Black Hundreds organized processions that soon turned into a wave of riots and pogroms. More than 300 Jews were murdered in Odessa, and over 2,000 were wounded during October 18–21, 1905. The rioting spread to sixty-four towns and cities, including Kiev, Simferopol, and Bialystok, as well as hundreds of townships in the Ukraine and other regions. The rioters were joined by members of the police, and the pogroms continued until the end of the summer of 1906. The death toll of this wave of violence was around 800. Thousands more were wounded, and there was extensive damage to property.

Between 1903 and 1905 several versions of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” were published in Russia. These were written by members of the Russian Secret Police. The protocols became a tool for anti-Jewish incitement, both in Russia and worldwide.¹⁵

Following the Kishinev pogrom, the Jews in most of the large Jewish communities established self-defense groups. The pogrom at Melitopol, for example, which took place in April 1905, was smaller than elsewhere, because armed Jewish self-defense units managed to curb and injure dozens of their attackers. At the end of April 1905, the Russian soldiers and police joined the pogrom in Zhitomir, killing 15 members of the Jewish defense league and wounding about 100 more. In several places, the Jewish defenders were joined by Russians, but these were but a few, against huge rioting mobs.¹⁶ By defending themselves against the rioters, Russia’s Jews raised their self-awareness and reinforced their national identity.

The first Duma to be elected in free elections, in which Jews were granted voting rights, brought in twelve Jewish delegates, representing a bloc that consisted of various Jewish political parties. The Duma was convened for the first time at the end of April 1906, and its Jewish delegates demanded an end to the pogroms and legislation that would grant equal rights to the Jews. But in July 1906, before their activity had a chance to bear fruit, the czar dispersed the Duma. Another Duma was elected before the outbreak of World War I, but its authority was curbed.

The anti-Jewish campaign continued, and a new blood libel, known as the “Beilis affair,” shocked public opinion in Russia and the rest of the world. The body of a Christian youth was found in a Kiev suburb on March 20, 1911. The boy had been murdered by a gang of young criminals, but anti-Semitic circles accused Mendel Beilis, a Jewish inhabitant of Kiev, of ritual murder. The authorities knew the identity of the murderers, but with the help of false witnesses, they set out to prove Beilis’s guilt. The trial began in September 1913 and aroused a sharp public debate. The prosecution found “expert witnesses” who tried to prove that Jews are required to murder Christians for their blood, which is then used in Jewish ritual. Beilis was represented by the finest Jewish and Russian defense lawyers. Although the judge helped the prosecution, the twelve-man jury — most of whom were peasants, appointed by the authorities — decided to acquit Beilis. Their sense of justice was greater than that of the legal representatives of the government, who staged both the libel and the trial.¹⁷

THE STRUGGLE OF THE JEWS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

The vast majority of Jewish society in Russia was Orthodox, conservative, and isolated from its non-Jewish surrounds. In general, it was a society that rejected any deviation from the traditional religious way of life that it had known for generations. Unlike the Jews of central and western Europe, the Jews of Russia felt no cultural inferiority vis-à-vis the majority of the non-Jews with whom they came in contact. The latter were mostly rural, and their culture and lifestyle bore no attractions that could tempt the Jews into relinquishing their own culture, traditions, and values.

Under the influence of the enlightened ideas that were making their way from Jewish communities in central Europe during the early years of the nineteenth century, an Enlightenment, or Maskilim Movement, began establishing itself among the Jews of Russia. Its founders, the Maskilim (Hebrew for “educated”), wanted to bring about change in the lifestyle of Jewish society and to establish and reinforce cultural ties with non-Jewish society. The Enlighteners focused mainly on reform in education, to expose Jewish children to a more secular way of life and to make them familiar with the language of the country, in order to bring them closer to their neighboring nations. In Russia, the Jewish Enlightenment developed differently from its central and western European counterpart, although it was there that it had first taken root. In Russia the Enlightenment turned its activity inward into its own Jewish society. It aimed at resurrecting the Hebrew language and laid the foundations for the growth of a new secular literary culture. Under the influence of Russian and other nations’ romantic literature, the

Enlightenment began writing extensively about subjects from the Bible, glorified their historical past in the Land of Israel, and, by doing so, aroused hopes of change in their depressing present. The Enlightenment writers in the Hebrew language included Peretz Smolensky and Abraham Mapu.

To influence the broad Jewish masses, the Enlightenment turned to Yiddish literature as well, and among the leading writers in this language were Mendele Mocher Sforim (Sholem Jacob Abramovich) and Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Rabinovich). The aim of these writers was to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment and to criticize the faults in Jewish society, but without relinquishing their Jewishness. In contrast to the Enlightened literature in western Europe, these writings, in Hebrew and Yiddish, reinforced, rather than weakened, the Jewish identity of the masses.¹⁸

Ideas of religious reform were not adopted by members of the Russian Jewish Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, which constituted a small minority in Jewish society, found it hard to pitch its ideas against the traditional leaders of the communities and conservative rabbis. Also, Jewish society was not yet open to the ideas of Enlightenment.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the movement expanded by way of the state-run schools and the modern secular Jewish schools where, in addition to religious lessons, the pupils were taught a variety of other subjects. The Enlightenment press in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian, which appeared during the 1850s, was also instrumental in spreading the movement's ideologies. Enlightenment in Russia succeeded in raising the cultural level of Jewish society, but influenced only a small part of the Jewish population. Most Jews continued to live as they always had, due to the government's policies, the lack of civil rights, and the reluctance of Russian society to accept Jews as their equals.²⁰

The Jewish Enlightenment developed three main trends during the 1880s and 1890s. The first trend aimed for general political and social integration, in keeping with the process that had taken place in western Europe. Many of those in support of this trend had cut themselves off from their people, assimilated into Russian society, and even changed their religion. This process took place among those Jews who had been permitted to live outside of the Pale of Settlement. The second trend turned to Jewish national revival and the various aspects of Zionism. The third trend concerned socialism, in its various aspects, which was beginning at that time to take root in Russian society.²¹

Already, in the 1870s, Zionist ideas and thoughts of a return to the Land of Israel had begun to appear in the Enlightenment press and literature. The rise of nationalism throughout Europe and the increasing pan-Slavism in Russia, with its attendant anti-Semitic voices, provided the catalyst for a Zionist reawakening.

The decisive about-face took place as a result of the 1881–82 wave of pogroms,

which reaffirmed to the Jews how powerful was the antagonism toward them, both from the masses and from the Russian government. Certain members of the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia began to return to their people and to national-Zionist ideas. Enlightenment thinker Y. L. Pinsker provided an ideological basis for these ideals in the booklet *Autoemancipation*, which he published in 1882. Pinsker pointed out gentile society's hatred of the Jews and blamed it on the Jews' unique existence and the fact that the Jews were strangers everywhere they lived. Their return to a position of being a normal nation—by establishing a sovereign state of their own—might alleviate the hatred toward them, but this would require a change in the self-awareness of the Jews—not emancipation granted to the Jews by other nations, but autoemancipation in their own land.

The Zionist idea took hold in Russia with the publication of the Russian and Hebrew translations of Theodore Herzl's book *The Jewish State* in 1896. In August 1897 the Zionist organization was founded in Bialystok, and like other political organizations in Russia, it also acted illegally. In 1903 its number of branches was 1,500.²² The Poale Zion (workers of Zion) party, which created the ideological synthesis between Socialism and Zionism, was founded in February 1906.²³ Emigration of Russian Jews to the Land of Israel continued between the pogrom years (1903–6) and the outbreak of World War I and even increased. Among these early immigrants were those who became leaders of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, such as David Ben-Gurion.²⁴

In October 1897 a group of Jewish socialists convened in Vilna and founded the Jewish Workers Party, the Bund. At the first meeting of the new organization, Arkadi Kramer, one of its leaders, said that the objective of the Bund was “not only the struggle for Russian political demands” but also “to protect the specific interests of Jewish workers . . . since the Jewish workers are suffering not only as workers but also as Jews.”²⁵ The Bund played an important role in the establishment of an all-Russian Social Democratic Party in March 1898, under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. It was decided that the Bund would be given the status within the new party of an autonomous organization. The Bund's influence spread among the Jewish workers, and between 1900 and 1905 its membership grew from 5,600 to 30,000.²⁶ At the second Russian Social Democratic Party convention in Brussels, Belgium, in 1903, the Bund demanded the reorganization of the party into a federation of national parties, a demand that was rejected. As a result, the Bund left the Russian Social Democratic Party.²⁷

The Bund increased its political activity, and its influence among the Jewish public grew during the anti-Jewish riots of 1903–6, when it organized self-defense units. The Bund made a valuable contribution to the culture and increased self-awareness of the Jewish proletariat; it resisted Zionism.

The Bund took an active part in the 1905 revolution.²⁸ The years of general reaction following the repression of the 1905–6 revolutionary wave, and up to the deposition of the czar in 1917, saw a decline in the Bund's activity. Some of the Bund's activists were exiled to Siberia, while others emigrated from Russia. As part of the internal struggles of Russian social democracy, the Bund supported the Mensheviks, who recognized the principle of national-cultural autonomy, and opposed the Bolsheviks, who rejected this principle.²⁹

RUSSIAN JEWS IN WORLD WAR I AND DURING THE REVOLUTION

The Jews during the War

Russia's Jews received the outbreak of war with expressions of patriotism. Thousands of Jews enlisted in the army, and many believed that the authorities would reward them for doing so by granting them equal civil rights. But this did not happen. Much of the war took place within the area of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, and the whole population suffered badly, but the suffering of the Jews was twofold. In the early months of the war, the Russian army command accused the Jews of supporting the Germans, and they were expelled from the regions close to the front, despite the fact that according to estimates, between 500,000 and 600,000 Jewish soldiers served in the Russian army during the war, many of whom were wounded or killed.

The expulsion of Jews eastward began in March 1915, and more than 500,000 Jews were forced out of their homes in the areas of Poland and Lithuania. The transfer was carried out with the utmost brutality, with the Jews having to leave their homes with only twenty-four to forty-eight hours' notice and to make their way eastwards, some on foot, others in goods trains. The swift advance of the German army and its occupation of vast territories prevented the expulsion of many thousands of additional Jews.³⁰

The Germans took control of large areas, including the cities of Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilnius as well as east Galicia. Around 1.5 million Jews lived in the areas occupied by the Germans. In order to gain the support of the Jewish population, the Germans eased restrictions on Jewish political parties and institutions. Nevertheless, the general condition of the Jews in the occupied regions was bad because of the war and increased anti-Semitism among the local population.³¹

The Jews between the 1917 February and October Revolutions

Their defeats in the war, coupled with the poverty and hunger inside Russia, resulted in unrest among the working classes. The army was sent in to suppress

a workers' rally in Petrograd on February 26, 1917, and it opened fire, killing or wounding many of the participants. This caused more disturbances, and soldiers, sent to repress them, joined the demonstrators. Nicholas II was forced to abdicate.

A provisional government was convened, made up of parties at the center of the political map. Alexander Kerensky became prime minister, and the new government decided to continue with the war against the Germans. Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, who until that time had been in exile in Switzerland, returned to Russia with the help of the German authorities and demanded the overthrow of the new regime and an end to the war. On November 7 (October 24, according to the old calendar), armed forces loyal to the Bolshevik cause stormed the Winter Palace, residence of the Kerensky government, arrested most of the ministers, and took control of the country.

For the Jews of Russia, the eight months between the February and October revolutions were the best and most productive in their entire history. The Jews had welcomed the February revolution, and indeed, on March 22, 1917, the provisional government issued a decree granting equal rights for all citizens, regardless of religion or ethnic origin.

The Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, was received enthusiastically by Russian Zionists. But the tragedy of Russian Zionism was that the Bolshevik revolution broke out only five days after the Balfour Declaration and cut off Russian Jewry from world Jewry.³²

The Bund was involved more closely in internal Russian politics, and most of its members supported the Mensheviks, who claimed that the time was not yet ripe for a proletariat revolution, and Russia should first undergo a period of capitalism. It was a position that refuted the concepts of the Bolsheviks, whose objective was to establish a communist regime without delay.³³

Civil War and Pogroms

The Bolsheviks' seizure of power started a new era in Russia and in the history of Russia's Jews. The new Soviet regime was in need of peace at all costs. On March 3, 1918, the German-Russian peace treaty was signed in Brest-Litovsk, according to terms dictated by Germany. Russia was obliged to give up territories in Belorussia, the Baltic states, and in Ukraine, including the city of Kiev.

The anti-Soviet forces, who were known as the "White Army" (distinguishing them from the Soviet "Red Army"), recovered and with the help of France, Britain, the United States, and Japan, who opposed Russia's withdrawal from the war, began military operations to quell the Bolshevik revolution. Between 1918 and 1920, a bloody civil war raged in Russia. The antirevolutionary forces

were anti-Semitic, and in their propaganda they accused the Bolshevik regime of being a Jewish regime.

Jews did indeed take key positions in the Soviet government, since most of the members of the former government officials had joined the antirevolutionary forces. However, the Jews in question were only a very small minority and consisted almost entirely of assimilated Jews. The large majority of Jews had no reason to rejoice at the Bolshevik revolution. The provisional government under Kerensky had given them equal rights, and for the few months between the February and October revolutions the Jews had enjoyed an unprecedented renaissance in their political and cultural lives. But for the antirevolutionary forces it was easy to point out the few Jews in the upper echelons of the communist leadership and to disregard completely the millions of Jews who were far removed from communism. There was also an excuse for the antirevolutionary forces to present the Bolsheviks as Jews and to initiate a huge wave of anti-Jewish pogroms. The situation was especially bad in the Ukraine, with its tradition of anti-Semitism.

With its defeat in the war, Germany withdrew from the Ukraine. An independent Ukrainian government was established in December 1918, and Semion Petlyura was appointed chief of staff of the Ukrainian army. Fierce battles raged on Ukrainian soil from 1918 through 1920 between the White Army, under the command of Anton Denikin, alongside Ukrainian nationalist forces against the Red Army. Lacking a stable government, large areas of the Ukraine were gripped by anarchy for many months. The country was at the mercy of local gangs under the command of atamans.

The civil war was accompanied by cruel anti-Jewish pogroms, perpetrated by the White Armies, gangs of atamans and rioters from among the local population, involving looting, rape, and murder. Between March–April 1918 and 1920, over 1,200 pogroms took place throughout the Ukraine, with the largest wave during 1919 and continuing on a smaller scale into 1920. Typical of these pogroms was the one perpetrated by Petlyura's men in the town of Proskurov (now Khmelnytskyi) on March 15, 1919. After the Soviet troops were forced out, the Ukrainian brigade, under the command of Ataman Samosenko, marched through the town in a victory parade. After the parade, the soldiers split up into small teams and made their way through the town, from house to house, murdering 1,600 Jews. The order to cease the pogrom came four hours later, and the soldiers marched to the railway station, accompanied by a brass band and patriotic songs. In the nearby township of Felshtin, the pogrom was joined by peasants from the local villages, and 485 people were murdered there.³⁴ Similar pogroms were carried out by Petlyura's men and gangs of Ukrainians in Elizavetgrad, where 1,526 Jews

were murdered between May 15 and May 17, 1919; in Radomysl the death toll was 1,000 Jews on June 1, 1919.³⁵

In his diary, one Jew described the pogrom in Chernobyl, north of Kiev, between April 7 and May 2, 1919, when an Ukrainian unit under the command of Ataman Struk took control of the town:

Armed murderers burst into the houses, shooting, killing. . . . I had hidden the children in the cellar. . . . The market is full of farmers' wagons—it appears that Struk had ordered the peasants to follow his soldiers, to pillage. . . . Any Jews they catch, they see as communists and kill them. . . . The local inhabitants go about the town as if all this is nothing to do with them, secretly gloating. . . . The Russians have marked their own homes with crosses and written “here lives a Christian.” They didn't allow the Jews into their homes.³⁶

The White Army pogroms were as cruel as those carried out by gangs led by atamans. A few days after entering Kiev in mid-October 1919, Denikin's men killed 600 Jews and looted most of their homes. In late December, Denikin's men murdered 1,800 Jews in the town of Fastov and wiped out entire Jewish neighborhoods.³⁷

Some 50,000 Jews were murdered in these pogroms, and together with those who later died of their wounds, hunger, and sickness as a result of the civil war and pogroms, the death toll reached 150,000. Half a million Jews were expelled or escaped from their homes, and many small communities were destroyed, never to be resurrected. In certain places, such as Odessa, the Jews succeeded in organizing self-defense units.³⁸ Maxim Gorky, one of the great twentieth-century Russian writers, was horrified by the pogroms and wrote in 1921:

There is no hiding from the grim truth—nowhere else in the world are Jews slaughtered and annihilated, with such love . . . as here, in Russia. Judging by the energies invested in them, the pogroms against the Jews must surely take first place in the list of “Great Historical Operations of the Russian Nation,” and it is quite obvious to me that this kind of activity is on the increase. . . . I can see this increase since 1885, when I myself witnessed the annihilation of a small number of Jews in Novgorod, but numerically and quality-wise the pogroms of the 1880s fall short of the pogroms of 1905–6, and the horrors of today—from the point of view of numbers and cruelty—leave the infamous Kishniev and Bialystok murders far behind. The sophistication is obvious.³⁹

That which communist ideology had not accomplished among the Jews was achieved by the pogroms. As far as the Jews were concerned, the Red Army and the Soviet regime were the ones who rescued them from the pogroms, and many

Jews who had formerly been far removed from communist ideology joined the ranks of the Red Army.

The armies of Denikin and Petlyura were defeated at the end of 1919, and the Red Army took control of all of east Ukraine. Gangs led by atamans continued to fight until 1921, when they were finally defeated by the Red Army.

While battle raged in the east Ukraine, a war was also being fought in western Ukraine. On November 1, 1918, the Ukrainians in Lvov declared west Ukraine an independent republic. Poland, which had just achieved independence, was unwilling to relinquish east Galicia, and its army conquered Lvov on November 23. The Polish army's triumphant entry into Lvov was accompanied by an anti-Jewish pogrom. More than 100 Jews were murdered, hundreds of others were wounded, and there was widespread looting of property. As an excuse for the pogrom, its perpetrators claimed that the Jews supported the Ukrainians. The truth was that the Jews, aware of their tenuous situation, were careful to keep neutral in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict.⁴⁰

During the 1919–20 war between Poland and Soviet Russia, the Polish army treated the Jews as if they were Soviet supporters. Polish soldiers conducted anti-Jewish pogroms when they reconquered Vilnius, Pinsk, and Lida.⁴¹

An armistice was reached in October 1920 between Poland and Soviet Russia. At the war's end, after the final borders between the Soviet Union and Poland had been determined, western Belorussia and western Ukraine remained under Polish sovereignty. The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were given independence, and Bessarabia was annexed to Romania. Of the over 5 million Jews in czarist Russia on the eve of World War I, only half remained in the USSR. The other half were included in the newly independent states of postwar eastern Europe.⁴²

2

Jews in the USSR and in the Annexed Territories between the Two World Wars

COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY AND THE JEWISH NATION

The political concepts of communism's founding fathers, coupled with their general attitude toward the future of Jewish nationality, were what shaped the Soviet Union's policies toward the Jews. Although the general concept remained constant, these policies contained tactical and transient contradictions. According to the forerunners of communism—Marx, Lenin, and Stalin—the Jews were not a nation like all the other nations. They condemned the Jews to assimilation wherever they lived. According to Karl Marx, the end of the capitalist regime meant that the Jews no longer had any right to exist, and they must be assimilated into non-Jewish society.¹

Lenin saw the Jews as a persecuted nation that, once freed of all anti-Jewish restrictions, would integrate into non-Jewish society.² Stalin's attitude toward the Jews, although influenced by communist ideology, also contained certain personal aspects. Stalin had received his basic education, which included elements of religious anti-Semitism, in an orthodox theological seminary in Georgia. Stalin outlined his attitude toward the Jewish nation in his 1913 paper on "Marxism and the National Issue," in which he defined the characteristics of a nation as "the historic development of a stable society, with its own language, territory, economic life, and a common psychological system that is expressed in a cultured society." The Jews, according to Stalin, lacked these qualities and were therefore not to be seen as a nation, and they should assimilate into their non-Jewish environment.

JEWES IN THE SOVIET UNION (OLD TERRITORIES)

The communist ideology was put to the test when the Bolsheviks came to power. The Soviet Union was a multinational country, so the question of nationality was of concern to the Communist Party and demanded practical and immediate solutions. As soon as the Bolsheviks rose to power, they established the People's Commissariat for National Affairs, headed by Stalin. The Commissariat was required to produce ways to culturally and economically develop the various nations in the Soviet Union. The People's Commissariat was divided into departments, known also as commissariats, each of which was responsible for a different national group; one of these was the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs.

The Commissariat for Jewish Affairs and the Yevseksiya

The Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was established in February 1918 under the leadership of Shimon Dimanshtain. The Jewish Commissariat was responsible for forging a bridge between communism and the country's large Jewish population. A Yiddish newspaper, *Der Emes*, was published under the auspices of the Jewish Commissariat.

Parallel with the Jewish Commissariat, the Communist Party set up a Jewish section, the Yevseksiya, which was part of the Communist Central Committee's propaganda branch, in which other national sections were also established (Polish, German, etc.). These sections served as tools for carrying out the party's policies among those nations that did not have a republic or districts of national autonomy within the Soviet Union. As well as heading the Jewish Commissariat, Dimanshtain also led the Yevseksiya secretariat. As an institution of the state, the Jewish Commissariat had to deal more with organizational matters, while the Yevseksiya was required to sell communism to the Jewish masses. The first national convention of the Jewish Commissariat and the Yevseksiya took place on October 20, 1918, and its leaders made it quite clear that these two bodies had been established not "to demand national autonomy for the Jews" but "to spread the ideas of the October revolution among the masses of Jewish workers, and for this reason only."³

The Commissariat for National Affairs was disbanded in 1924, and with it, the Jewish Commissariat. The only Jewish organization now operating was the Yevseksiya, which continued to focus on spreading communist propaganda among the Jews and, subsequently, on the struggle against Judaism and Zionism. On the other hand, the Yevseksiya fostered the Yiddish culture, in the hope of creating a basis for Jewish national existence in the Soviet state.

In many ways 1928 was a turning point for the Soviet Union. Stalin's totali-

tarian rule was strengthened and the period of NEP — the new economic policy, which had brought some relief — was reversed; the five-year plan was introduced and was followed by rapid industrialization and agricultural collectivization. The heavy hand of authority was felt on the daily lives of the population. The war on ever-growing national trends in the various republics was stepped up as the 1920s drew to a close; and the Yevseksiya, which had been accused of nurturing Jewish culture and nationalistic perversions, was disbanded in January 1930. The breakup of the Yevseksiya meant that the authorities were, in effect, ignoring the last essence of Jewish national existence. The Yevseksiya had borne the flag of struggle against Jewish institutions and religion. Loyally, it served the wishes of the regime and the ideology of communism. As soon as the Soviet authorities realized that the job of the Yevseksiya was over, it was disbanded.⁴

The War on the Jewish Communities and Religion

From the outset the communist regime waged a war on religion, and in December 1917 it ordered all the religious institutions to hand over their schools and seminars to the People's Commissariat for Education. So as not to be construed as anti-Semitic, the war on the Jewish religion was entrusted to the Yevseksiya.

After having enjoyed renewed prosperity between the February and October 1917 revolutions, the Jewish communities (*kehila*) were disbanded in July 1919 by order of the Jewish Commissariat. In the absence of functioning Jewish communities, several spheres, especially in the field of welfare, remained untended, causing great suffering among the Jewish needy. When they existed, the Jewish communities had been responsible for an extensive web of old people's homes, hospitals, and orphanages, which the Jews — and especially the poor among them — greatly needed.

The war against the Jewish religion took various forms, including propaganda in the Yiddish press, and propaganda meetings were held for Jewish workers, etc. Many synagogues were closed down "by popular demand," which was organized by the Yevseksiya. In 1918, rabbis and religious officials were stripped by law of their civil rights, as were Christian clergy, and they were thus denied the right to receive housing, food rations, and medical care. Rabbis were also arrested and imprisoned; many were exiled.⁵

The war on religion was universal, but the Jews were more badly hit than any other group. For generations their religion had been the mainstay of the Jews' way of life, and the bond between their religion and nationality had been inseparable. Despite the secularization process undergone by the prerevolution generation of Jewish society in Russia, religion was still a firm foundation in the lives of the Jews and a barrier between them and assimilation. As opposed to the war on other religions, the Soviet regime's war against the Jewish religion was

clothed in a war against the Jewish nation. Notwithstanding the closing down of synagogues, Jewish religious life did not cease, although it continued on a much smaller scale.⁶

The Decline and Destruction of the Jewish National Parties

The Yevseksiya involved itself with the war on the Jewish political parties and any other form of independent Jewish organization, and the methods it used included legislation, persuasion, and force.

The Yevseksiya used pressure and persuasion in its attempts to destroy the Bund. The fact that the Bund was, ideologically, also a Marxist party made it easier for the Yevseksiya to act toward its destruction. The final convention of the Bund took place in March 1921, when it was decided to disband and join the Communist Party. Most Bund members chose not to join the Communist Party and abandoned political activity altogether. Bund leaders who joined the Party took over key positions in the Yevseksiya, but most of them were murdered during the purging of the 1930s.⁷

The Yevseksiya worked energetically at depressing Zionist activity, and between 1922 and 1924, thousands of Zionists were arrested; some were exiled to Siberia.⁸ During the late 1920s and early 1930s, all organized underground Zionist activity in the Soviet Union came to a full stop, but the Zionist ideal was never extinguished. Between 1919 and 1936, some 32,000 Jews emigrated from the Soviet Union to the Land of Israel.⁹

In their war on Zionism, the Soviets also included the Hebrew language and culture. On August 19, 1918, the Jewish Commissariat announced that education in Jewish schools would be conducted in Yiddish and that Hebrew was forbidden. Most of the writers in the Hebrew language left Russia; some writers who had not succeeded in leaving were imprisoned and exiled.¹⁰

The End of Traditional Jewish Occupations

Seven years of war shook the economic situation of Russia's Jews to its foundations, especially since most of them had been poverty stricken even beforehand. One of the most important Jewish occupations in the Pale of Settlement had consisted of trade between the city and the outlying villages. This ceased almost entirely. As a result of the devastation caused by the wars, there was no longer anything left for the towns and the villages to supply to each other. Almost all the small industries and artisans' workshops were nationalized, and all private enterprise was stopped. Most of the Jewish communities in the small towns and villages were left with no regular sources of income. Moreover, many Jews had belonged to the group of people who were deprived of civil rights, a group which

included those who had in the past been employers of workers—in Soviet terms, “exploiters,” and those “whose political ideals are hostile to the new regime.” These people were denied the right to employment and medical treatment, and their children were only admitted to schools where there were unfilled quotas. According to estimates, the number of Jews classified as “deprived of” (*Lishentsy*) reached 830,000.¹¹ Many young people moved to the large towns in the hope of finding employment. One of the serious repercussions of this period was the decline of the Jewish township, the *shtetl*.¹²

With the help of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Jewish Public Committee for Helping Victims of the Pogroms was established in June 1920. The Soviet government was interested in receiving aid from world Jewry; indeed, at that time it also strove to lift the political and economic boycott imposed on it by much of the rest of the world. The Public Committee was extremely important to Russia’s Jews: during 1921 alone it provided food and clothing to some 50,000 Jewish children, most of whom had been orphaned by the pogroms. The Committee also extended medical and financial aid to the Jewish agricultural settlements in Crimea and the Ukraine, many of whose inhabitants were starving, having been forced to flee there as a result of the pogroms. However, the Committee was able to solve only a few of the hardships imposed on the Jews of Russia during that period.¹³

Agricultural Settlement

In the aftermath of the civil war, the Jews sought ways to alleviate their poverty and starvation by working the land around their homes or by relocating. World Jewish organizations such as the JDC and ORT, which were active in Russia at that time, helped new agricultural settlers, and many families took up farming. The Jewish Commissariat and the Yevseksiya began seeing the new Jewish agriculture as a solution for large numbers of Jews and one that could turn them into a productive part of Soviet society. The government backed Jewish settlement activity, and in August 1924 it established the Commission for the Settlement of Jewish Workers on the Land—the Komzet—which was an official government body. The Society for the Agriculture Organization of Working-Class Jews in the USSR (the Ozet) was established in January 1925 to recruit colonists and to raise funds to help Jewish farmers. The Komzet examined regions for settlement of Jews, and it was decided on certain areas of southern Ukraine, which already had Jewish settlements, and some parts of the Crimea. Jewish settlement flourished, and by 1929–30 about 280,000 Jews (11.1 percent of the entire Jewish population of the Soviet Union) lived off the land.

Aside from the economic advantages of agricultural settlement, there was also

the fact that, according to Soviet law, in a place in which at least 500 of its inhabitants were of the same nationality, it was possible to establish a national council, and all the activity in that council had to be conducted in the mother tongue of those inhabitants. Several national councils in a continuous geographical region were entitled to establish a national region. These councils focused their activity on supervising the communal, economic, and cultural lives of their inhabitants. By 1932, there were 168 Jewish councils, encompassing about 15 percent of the Ukraine's Jews, in other words, home to 172,000 people. Jewish settlement in Belorussia was somewhat more dispersed, and in 1927 there were only 28 Jewish councils there, serving a population of 35,000 inhabitants. The Russian Republic had only 11 Jewish councils, and in Crimea the number of councils in 1931 was 32. In the Ukraine there were three Jewish national regions—Kalinindorf, Naidzlatopol, and Stalindorf—and two in Crimea—Freidorf and Larindorf. With these Jewish national councils in mind, some Jewish members of the Ozet and even in the Yevseksiya began toying with the idea of establishing an autonomous Jewish district and possibly even a Jewish Soviet republic.¹⁴

Neither the Ukraine nor Crimea was singled out by the Soviet government for a Jewish national territorial unit; the preferred choice was the far eastern region of Birobidzhan. The decision on this was made during the years 1927–28 because the Soviet Union was interested in settling and developing the far east and, by so doing, strengthening its borders with Manchuria against attack by Japan. Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan failed. During the first five years 20,000 Jews went to live there and 60 percent of them left. In 1933, there were 8,000 Jews in Birobidzhan, constituting no more than 20 percent of the entire population of the area.¹⁵ The Birobidzhan plan on the one hand and the five-year industrial plan on the other, both of which opened many promising new opportunities for the Jews, put an end to the development of Jewish settlement in the Ukraine and Crimea. Collectivization, which began in the 1930s, dealt another blow to Jewish agricultural settlement.

The Five-Year Plan, Collectivization, and Industrialization

Agricultural collectivization (1928–32) and the first five-year plan (1928–33), which aimed at boosting Soviet industry, brought about far-reaching change in Soviet society in general and in the lives of the Jews. In order to carry out agricultural collectivization, Stalin used terror, confiscated property, and eradicated the landowning class, sending millions of farmers to exile in Siberia.¹⁶

The process of agricultural collectivization was detrimental to Jewish agriculture as well. Several agricultural settlements were joined into a single kolkhoz, so that some of the settlements lost their Jewish character. In the new political

reality, the authorities began restricting the activity of Jewish organizations that supported Jewish settlement. This badly affected the settlers, who at that time were especially needy.¹⁷

Thousands of Jewish families left agricultural life as a result of collectivization and turned to the cities, where rapid industrialization created employment opportunities. According to various estimates, by 1939 there were around 125,000 Jews in kolkhozes in the Ukraine, Crimea, Belorussia, and Birobidzhan—half the number of Jews who had been there in 1930. The Komzet and the Ozet, as well as the Agrojoint, were dissolved between 1936 and 1938, and many of their activists were imprisoned and murdered during Stalin's "purging."¹⁸

The first five-year plan created a demand for workers in the industrial centers. Many Jews moved from regions in what had once been the Pale of Settlement to cities inside Russia, especially to Moscow and Leningrad. Far-reaching changes took place in the number of Jews employed in industrial plants. Toward the end of the five-year plan in 1932, some 750,000 Jews were employed in industry.¹⁹

An expression of the modernization and integration of Jewish society into the mainstream social fiber of the USSR is the increased number of Jewish students in the various universities. By 1927 some 23,000 Jewish students were attending Soviet universities and institutes of higher education, constituting 14.3 percent of the entire student body, as against the percentage of Jews in the country's entire population, which was 1.8 percent. The historian Samuel Ettinger wrote about the integration of Jews into Soviet society: "Many Jews, seeking higher education, became part of the new establishment, which encompassed education, medicine, economic planning, and also included the military and the secret police. This changed the socioeconomic structure of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union."²⁰

The Rise and Fall of Jewish Education and Culture

As part of their policy, the authorities defined their attitude toward the ex-territorial national minorities that were part of the Soviet Union; this included the Jews. The Jews were granted the right to establish schools in which the language was Yiddish.²¹ The government was interested in instilling communist ideology among Jewish children and young people, and there was no way of doing this except in a language which they all understood. Jewish schools had to be tools for introducing communist ideology to the Jews and not for perpetuating their national existence.

The late 1920s and early 1930s were a peak period for the Jewish schools in the Soviet Union, with some 150,000 youngsters, about one-third of all the Jewish school-age children in the USSR. Later the number of children in these

schools dropped. Demographic changes, especially the relocation of Jews from the former Pale of Settlement to Russia proper, during the years of the five-year plan, had their effects on this decline.²²

Stalin, whose power was absolute, intervened in the early 1930s in changing the Soviet Union's internal-national policies and strengthened the Russification process. In the Jewish schools, the subjects in the curriculum dealing with Jewish issues were reduced even further, and Jewish history was removed entirely. The Jewish nation had become a nation devoid of its history. A further disadvantage in Jewish education was that it took place only in elementary schools, and graduates who wanted to continue their education in state-run high schools and universities were obliged to take entrance exams in Russian. Thus, in order to advance in Soviet society, it was necessary to know Russian, so that many Jewish parents preferred to send their children to Russian schools. On the eve of World War II, the Jewish education system in the USSR had dwindled to such an extent that it was on the verge of liquidation.²³

The Russian Revolution had filled the hearts of Jewish writers, who remained in the Soviet Union, with hope of a new dawn a-breaking. Until 1928, these writers still enjoyed a measure of creative freedom. The older writers, those who were still rooted in traditional Jewish life, wrote on Jewish topics: life in the shtetl, persecution and pogroms, the revolution and the changes that were taking place in Jewish society — while paying positive attention to the transformations in the nation. Then there were the younger writers, those who accepted unreservedly the communist regime and its ideologies. According to this stream of Jewish writers, the task of literature was to glorify life in the Soviet state and to revere the leader, Stalin.²⁴

During the 1930s, there was increased pressure on Jewish and non-Jewish writers who tried to maintain a measure of creative freedom. In order to survive and continue writing, most of these writers imposed censorship on their work. The national foundations of Yiddish literature diminished, and in 1938 the Jewish communists' newspaper, *Der Emes*, was closed down.²⁵

The first Soviet Yiddish theater was established in Moscow in 1919, and similar theaters were founded in other cities. The authorities saw in these theaters a useful propaganda tool. By 1939 a dozen professional Yiddish theaters were still in operation across the Soviet Union.²⁶

Cultural/educational activity in the Yiddish language was influenced by the Soviet government's communist policies and its unique attitude toward the Jews as a nation. The relative boom in Yiddish culture during the late 1920s and early 1930s can be the result of the government's desire to spread communist ideology among the Jewish population, in a language (Yiddish) that is comprehensible

to them. The Stalin's growing despotism, and its view that developing national cultures equaled nationalism, was also detrimental to Yiddish culture. The new anti-national policies were compatible with communist ideology, which did not consider the Jews to be a nation and condemned them to assimilation. Any legitimization and encouragement given to the Jewish national culture was a temporary deviation from this ideology, and by the mid-1930s Soviet policy reverted to its original orthodox concepts concerning the Jews.

Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union

The end of the civil war and the defeat of the antirevolutionary forces resulted in fewer expressions of anti-Semitism. However, during the second half of the 1920s, anti-Semitism was again on the rise. This time anti-Jewish feeling seeped into previously unaffected parts of society, including industrial workers, intellectual circles, and university students. Anti-Semitism even seeped into the Union of Communist Youth movement (Komsomol) and the Communist Party itself. A new wave of anti-Semitism gathered momentum among industrial workers. During the years of rapid industrialization, large numbers of Jews had relocated to the industrial centers. The fact that Jews were taking over positions in all levels of industry — labor, clerical, and managerial — caused resentment among their non-Jewish counterparts. During the second half of the 1920s, many members of the middle classes, including industrial workers, were still suffering from unemployment. There was unemployment in rural areas, too, and many young people flowed into the cities from the rural areas in search of work. The way to rise socially and to achieve a reasonable standard of living, therefore, required a good job, either in industry or by joining the growing ranks of party and government functionaries. The fact that the Jews, too, participated in the fierce competition for these jobs made them a natural target for anti-Semitic ill will.

Since higher education was the key to securing leading positions in industry and the various government and party offices, the relatively high percentage of Jewish students in the universities caused outbursts of anti-Semitism there. The relatively large number of positions held by Jews in the civil service, including the secret police and military, were also among the causes of anti-Semitism.

Plans for Jewish settlement in the Ukraine and Crimea also served as justification for anti-Semitic incitement. Notwithstanding the fact that the areas allocated to Jewish agricultural settlement were quite small, uninhabited, and mostly infertile, the plan aroused anti-Semitic sentiments and complaints that the best lands were being put aside for the Jews. Crimea's Tatar population opposed the settlement of Jews, for fear that this might blur the region's Tatarian character.²⁷

Even the conflicts within the Communist Party following the 1924 death of Lenin were tainted by anti-Semitic undertones; indeed, Stalin's major opponent

was the Jew Leon Trotsky, and many of his earlier adversaries had also been Jews. Stalin presented this conflict as a clash between national-patriotic and “alien” sources.²⁸ The people of the Soviet Union had no trouble identifying these alien sources with the Jews. His war with Trotsky and other members of his opposition reinforced Stalin’s negative attitude toward the Jews.

Although Stalin’s purges throughout the Soviet Union during the 1930s, and especially in 1937 and 1938, were not directed specifically against the Jews, they did away with the old guard of the Communist Party, many of whom were Jews. Among the casualties of Stalin’s purges were many Jewish cultural leaders as well as key activists in various spheres of Jewish life; the former commissar for Jewish affairs, Dimanshtain, was one, as were heads of the Jewish autonomous province in Birobidzhan.²⁹ Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union never disappeared, and it continued to flourish until World War II.

Numbers of Jews in Regions Conquered by Nazi Germany

According to the January 17, 1939, census, the Jews in the Soviet Union prior to the outbreak of World War II numbered 3,028,538 and constituted 1.8 percent of the country’s population.³⁰ But this number does not include an unspecified number of culturally integrated and assimilated Jews who did not declare themselves as Jews.³¹

An accurate assessment of the number of Jews residing in the regions conquered by the German army in 1941–42 is important in assessing the number of Soviet Jews who were among the victims of the Holocaust. In Belorussia, the number of Jews was 375,092, constituting 6.7 percent of the population. The Jews in the Ukraine numbered 1,532,776, or 5 percent of the population. In the Russian Federal Republic, the Jews numbered 854,334, which was 2.23 percent of the population. Most of the Russian Federal Republic’s Jews lived in the two largest cities: Moscow had a Jewish population numbering 250,181, while Leningrad’s Jewish population was 201,542 strong. Some 200,000 Jews lived in the western regions of this republic, which were captured by the Germans in the war.³²

On the eve of World War II, according to the 1939 population census, 2,134,000 Jews lived in all parts of the Soviet Union that were captured by the Germans in 1941 and 1942.

THE JEWS OF THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES

The aftermath of World War I and the various regional wars of 1918–20 created a new political map in eastern Europe. New states were established in the western areas of former czarist Russia: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and

Estonia. Bessarabia and north Bukovina had been annexed to Romania. The new states started their sovereign existence as democracies and, in time, began veering toward totalitarianism. In each of these states the dominant nation adopted policies that would reinforce its national substructure; this was at the expense of the country's minority communities, in particular the Jews.

The lives of the Jews in these states differed from those of their brethren who continued to live in the Soviet Union. Their status and circumstances, as well as the attitudes of the authorities and of society toward them, were dictated by political and economic conditions and the levels of anti-Semitism in these countries. This Jewish population shared several characteristics:

On the whole, they were Yiddish speakers. There was very little cultural integration, and there were few mixed marriages.

Cultural life was conducted within an internal Jewish framework, with little participation in the culture of the dominant nation.

Jewish life was religious-Orthodox, and there was a growing process of secular-national modernization, which was expressed in thriving grassroots Zionist and socialist political parties.

They were mostly of the lower to middle socioeconomic class, mostly working class, with large sections of poverty.

An educational and cultural system was developed with Hebrew/Yiddish schools, literature, and newspapers.

The Jews of West Belorussia and West Ukraine

Poland suffered from political instability. On the right was the extremely nationalist, anti-Semitic Narodowa Demokracja (ND) Party, under the leadership of Roman Dmowski. Representing the interests of the Polish middle classes, the ND strove to rid Poland of its Jews by causing them to emigrate. But because emigration was a lengthy process, the party worked on a short-term system of weakening the Jews on all levels of their lives, including economic.³³ The country's political instability led to a coup d'état in 1926 by Josef Pilsudski, hero of Poland's struggle for independence. Pilsudski created an authoritarian regime that lasted until his death in 1935, when the government passed into the hands of a group of army officers with fascist tendencies.

The history of the Jews who lived in west Belorussia and west Ukraine was part of the overall history of Polish Jewry between the two world wars. But the specific problems of the region, in other words Ukrainian versus Polish; Belorussians versus Polish, the inherent religious pluralism—Catholic, Pravoslaviv, Uniats—all

had a profound effect on the character, behavior, and history of the Jews who lived there. In the conflicts and wars between the Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Soviets in the years 1918–20, the Jews tended to take a neutral stand, because they lived in a multinational region and did not want to support one side against another. History had taught them that this was the best way to behave, so as not to expose themselves to accusations and violation. According to the 1931 census, the Jewish population in west Belorussia and west Ukraine was 1,329,018 strong.³⁴

The Jews of Poland depended on government policies toward them. In some important economic sectors, the system of government monopoly and control that gave Polish nationals priority in employment had a derogatory effect on the Jews by forcing them out of their jobs. The migration of Poles to the cities of east Poland, as part of the government's policies of Polishizing these regions, affected the Jews economically, since the newcomers pushed the Jews out of their traditional sources of income. The many Ukrainian cooperative societies that were established in Volhynia and east Galicia during the second half of the 1920s provided adverse competition for traditional Jewish traders and artisans.³⁵

The economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s and the economic freeze during the 1930s severely harmed the Jews. Right-wing circles imposed a boycott on all Jewish traders and artisans. This policy, which before 1935 had been inspired by the ND Party, became almost official after the death of Pilsudski. The economic boycott against the Jews was accompanied by physical attacks on Jewish businesses; sometimes these even developed into full-scale pogroms.³⁶

The rise of Nazism in Germany was also instrumental to the growing anti-Semitism in Poland. Anti-Semitic circles and Polish professional trade unions called on the Poles to ostracize Jewish members. In 1937, the universities adopted a “back bench ghetto” system that forcefully separated Jewish students from their non-Jewish counterparts. A law was passed on March 25, 1938, forbidding the ritual (kosher) slaughtering of livestock. Poland's Jews fought for their civil rights and for their rights as an ethnic minority, and both houses of the Polish parliament, the Seim and the Senate, provided the arena for the Jews' struggle.³⁷

In this multiethnic region a political struggle went on within Jewish society. The majority of the region's Jews supported the Zionist movement.³⁸ The Bund, which had significant influence among the Jewish workers, preached that the solution to the problems of the Jews lay in the establishment of a socialist Poland. In Poland, the relatively small Communist Party, with a substantial number of Jewish members, was outlawed.³⁹

At the core of Jewish activity stood its education system, and there was a constant struggle with the authorities over its independence and government funding.⁴⁰ There was also perpetual contention within the Jewish community

itself with regard to the kind of education the children should receive: should it be religious or secular, should it be in Hebrew or in Yiddish, etc.⁴¹ In west Belorussia and west Ukraine, many newspapers were published in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish, supplying a voice to the various political streams within Jewish society. Many of the towns had their own Jewish theaters and sport clubs.

A central aspect of Jewish life was the community. According to the 1919 Communities Law, which authorized the community to collect taxes from the Jewish public, all Jews belonged to a community unless they had defected from it. During the period between the two world wars, the Jewish communities in eastern Poland underwent a process of democratization.⁴²

Government policies and the harsh economic situation in the late 1920s drove many Jews into poverty. By supplying orphanages, old people's homes, schools, yeshivas, hospitals, and welfare clinics, the communities did their best to support their needy members. Aid to the needy was also provided by the JDC and other organizations.⁴³

The Jews of Bessarabia and North Bukovina

Following the annexation of Bessarabia and north Bukovina to Romania, the fate of the Jews of these regions was joined to those of Romania—including the anti-Jewish discrimination that was part and parcel of Jewish life in that country. In 1930 the Jewish population in Bessarabia numbered some 207,000, while that of north Bukovina was 64,000.⁴⁴

The legal status of Romania's Jews between the two world wars was determined in the 1919 Versailles Treaty, in which Romania was forced to grant citizenship to all people residing on its soil. But the Romanians were particularly reluctant to grant citizenship to the Jews of the newly annexed territories of Bessarabia and Bukovina and demanded proof that they had lived in the region before November 18, 1918. This demand left the refugees from the Ukrainian pogroms without citizenship unless they bribed officials. Having lost their prewar import and export connections with Russia, the economical situation of the Bessarabian Jews was grim. Under these circumstances, many of the Jews of Bessarabia were obliged to emigrate.⁴⁵

But, notwithstanding the harsh conditions, Jewish life continued to the full in Bessarabia and Bukovina. The Jewish education system included schools where the teaching was conducted in Hebrew or Yiddish. Although officially recognizing the existence of Jewish schools, the Romanian government placed obstacles in their way, as part of its "Romanization" policies. Jewish schoolchildren were obliged to take their exams in Romanian. Many of them failed and were thus prevented from going on to obtain a higher education.⁴⁶

Both the Zionist movement and the Bund were active in Bessarabia and Bukovina. As in other areas of eastern Europe, here, too, there was a conflict within the Jewish communities over Yiddish vs. Hebrew, religious vs. secular education—and, together, they all opposed assimilatory trends. A large and eclectic number of Jewish books and periodicals were published in Bessarabia and Bukovina.⁴⁷

Anti-Semitism was rife during the 1920s in the universities, and demands were made to introduce a *numerus clausus*. On July 24, 1927, Corneliu Codreanu established the League of Archangel Michael, whose ideologies were based on religious anti-Semitism and a racist worldview. The league changed its name in 1929 to Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*), and its slogan was “To Protect the Christian Religion and Culture against Jewish Bolshevism.” The Iron Guard favored dictatorship over democracy, and in order to achieve its goals, it used political terror.

Under the leadership of the Iron Guard, the right-wing and anti-Semitic forces in Romania gained strength during the 1930s. The rise to power of the Nazis in Germany and Germany’s increasing influence in Europe contributed to the rise of fascism in Romania. In February 1938, Carol II commissioned a dictatorship of his own. He took steps against those members of the Iron Guard who jeopardized his rule and had several of the organization’s leaders executed. At the same time, the king made overtures to Germany, with the purpose of reinforcing economic ties between the two countries.

The Jews in the Baltic States

The Jews of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia shared a historical background. Relations between the Jews and non-Jews in these countries during the reign of the czars were better than in other parts of Russia. Nationalism in these states was not as strong as in Poland and Romania, and on receiving independence, the Baltic nations did not bring with them a powerful tradition of anti-Semitism. Still, anti-Semitism increased in these countries during the years of their independence, especially during the 1930s when the middle classes, with the support of the government, competed increasingly with Jewish tradesmen and artisans in the cities. Most revelations of anti-Semitism were economy based.

The Jews of Lithuania formed a homogeneous society with a unique history and culture. They were among a group of Jews known as Litvaks, and they had historic roots in greater Lithuania, which in the Middle Ages had included large areas of Belorussia. The Litvaks had a profound Jewish awareness, and they jealously protected their Jewish culture and heritage.⁴⁸ The historic and flourishing cultural center of the Litvaks was the city of Vilnius, known by the Jews as Vilna-Jerusalem of Lithuania. Between the two world wars Vilnius had been a part of

Poland, so that, for Lithuania's Jews, the capital had been Kaunas. Lithuania's Jewish population in 1926 was 157,527 strong and constituted almost 8 percent of the country's population. The number of Jews in Lithuania declined due to emigration and by 1939 was only 147,000.⁴⁹

During the first few years of its independence, Lithuania's government showed a positive attitude toward the Jews. On August 5, 1919, it published a declaration of civil rights and autonomy for its national minorities, including the Jews, and financial support for Jewish schools. Jewish institutions received recognition as institutions of the state.⁵⁰ No other Jewish community in Europe at that time was granted national autonomy and so many rights. However, the extensive autonomy granted to the national minorities was to be a passing episode. Most of the promises given in the 1919 declaration were repealed in 1924.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the large majority of Jewish children attended Jewish schools and were brought up in a national-Jewish spirit, and this determined the image and cultural life of Lithuania's Jewish population. The three large yeshivas in Lithuania—Telsiai (Telz), Panevezys, and Slobodka (in a Kaunas suburb)—attracted students from other countries.⁵²

Although Zionism was a dominant factor in the Jewish community, the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel and the Bund movement were also well rooted. The deteriorating economic situation and the awareness that Jewish youngsters had no future in Lithuania gave strength to the Zionist message. Some of Lithuania's Jews belonged to the Communist Party.⁵³

A right-wing nationalistic revolution in 1926 resulted in an autocratic regime under the leadership of Augustine Voldemaras and increased discrimination against the national minorities, especially the Jews. With the rise to power of the Nazis, anti-Semitic ideas that were blowing in from Germany began gaining the support of nationalist circles in Lithuania, among them the fascist organization Geležinis Vilkas—the “Iron Wolf.” Anti-Semitism increased during the mid-1930s. Physical attacks on Jews increased in number, with virtually no official response.⁵⁴

According to the population census, the number of Jews in Latvia in 1935 was 93,479, which was 4.8 percent of the total population.⁵⁵ By 1940 their number had dropped to about 92,000. All the Jewish political parties were active in Latvia—the Zionists, Agudat Israel, and the Bund.⁵⁶

With its struggle against Russian and German cultural influences, which it tried to weaken, the Latvian national movement supported a Jewish education system. In Latvia, as in other countries in eastern Europe, there was constant conflict regarding Jewish education—whether it should be in Hebrew or in Yiddish, secular or religious. One of Latvia's Jewish intellectuals was the emi-

nent historian Shimon Dubnov, who had settled in Riga after being forced out of Germany with the Nazi rise to power.⁵⁷

Right-wing circles in Latvia established the Perkonkrust (Thunder Cross), a semimilitary organization, nationalist in ideology and anti-Semitic in character. By the early 1930s there were frequent calls to deny the Jews the right to vote, to deal in trade, etc. The unstable internal situation resulted in a political overthrow, and on March 15, 1934, the right-wing Farmers' Party, with its leader, Karl Ulmanis, seized power. The democratic regime was over, parliament was dispersed, and all political activity was banned. Ulmanis's nationalist-autocratic regime did not harm the Jews' individual rights as citizens of the country, and it even granted entrance permits to hundreds of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany.⁵⁸

Estonia had a very small Jewish community; in 1922 it numbered 4,566 and constituted 0.4 percent of the country's population. During the czarist regimes, Estonia was not a part of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, and the few Jews who were allowed to reside there were mostly former Cantonists, university graduates, or wealthy traders. About half the country's Jews resided in the capital city of Tallin.⁵⁹ In the period between the two world wars, the community underwent a process of national reawakening in which all the Jewish parties took part. In common with other national minorities, the Jews enjoyed extensive cultural autonomy during the mid-1920s.

The Jews formed a negligible minority in Estonia's population and were not exposed to specific anti-Semitism. With time, however, the right-wing circles in the country grew stronger under the leadership of Dr. Hjalmar Mae, who tried unsuccessfully to seize power in 1936 with the support of Nazi Germany. Mae subsequently escaped to Germany. But anti-Semitic groups demanded a *numerus clausus* and succeeded in reducing the number of Jewish employees in the country's economic sector.⁶⁰

The Jews of the annexed territories underwent three processes during the period between the two world wars—an unprecedented cultural renaissance in Hebrew and Yiddish, a process of democratization, and a sharp regression in their economic status to the extent that many became impoverished and required welfare aid. With the rise of the Nazis in Germany, the Jews of these regions became increasingly aware of impending danger and began to seek emigration, but emigration options were severely limited.

TWO

The Impact of Political
and Military Developments
on the Jews of Eastern
Europe, September 1, 1939,
to June 22, 1941

3

German-Soviet Relations and Geopolitical Changes in Eastern Europe

LEBENSRAUM, RACE, JEWS, AND MARXISM

World War II began with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland at dawn on September 1, 1939. The war was supposed to effectuate the aims of Germany and Adolf Hitler to achieve hegemony in Europe and to convert all of eastern Europe—the areas of Poland, the European part of the Soviet Union, and the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea—into *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German nation. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler provided an ideological justification for his policy:

Only an adequately large space on this earth assures a nation of freedom of existence. . . . Germany today is no world power. . . . We cannot speak of a world power in connection with a formation whose political mother country is limited to the absurd area of 500,000 square kilometers. . . . If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states. Here fate itself seems desirous of giving us a sign. By handing Russia to Bolshevism, it robbed the Russian nation of that intelligentsia which previously brought about and guaranteed its existence as a state. . . . It has been replaced by the Jew.¹

Germany's medieval concept of "expanding eastward" (*Drang nach Osten*)—the Teutonic Order, Bearers of the Cross, the Hanseatic League—was joined in the first half of the twentieth century by the racist aspect. "The Nordic race," claimed Hitler, "has the right to rule the world, and we must turn this racist right into a guiding line in our foreign policy."² The Jews, according to Hitler, are bearers of Marxist ideology, whose concepts are the antithesis of his National Socialism. "The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature. . . . In Russian Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination."³

Hitler's ideological concept, which was based on the combined desire to expand eastward and a profound hatred of Marxism and the Jews, was expressed in the strategic policies he directed eastward—toward the Soviet Union. The destruction of these would provide the German nation with its necessary *Lebensraum* and deal a death blow to Marxist ideology and the Jews.

During the first years of Hitler's rule, the Soviet Union did not present a policy that was anti-Nazi Germany. On the contrary, it sought ways to negotiate with Germany. According to Soviet prime minister Vyacheslav Molotov on January 28, 1935, two years after Hitler's rise to power, "The Soviets have and had no desire, but to maintain good relations with Germany. . . . The Soviet Union strongly desires to develop ties with all nations, without excluding countries with fascist regimes."⁴ The Soviets' pragmatic approach, which was devoid of all ideology, met with no German reciprocation. The Germany-Italy-Japan Axis, signed in Berlin on November 25, 1936, was directed against the Soviet Union. The Nazi plans for territorial expansionism, combined with the conditions in Europe during the spring of 1939 following the signing of the Munich Pact on September 29, 1938, and Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, led Hitler to believe that he was free to begin implementing his policies in eastern Europe. Germany's first objective was Poland. Britain and France promised to come to the aid of Poland in the event of a German invasion.

THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV PACT AND THE ANNEXATION OF WEST BELORUSSIA AND WEST UKRAINE TO THE SOVIET UNION

After Britain and France agreed de facto to Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Soviets began suspecting that the West was trying to point Nazi Germany's expansionism in their direction. In a speech to the eighteenth Communist Party Congress on March 10, 1939, Stalin accused the western powers of policies that were meant "to cause a conflict between the Soviet Union and Germany," and hinted to Germany that there was room for negotiations. "Soviet policy," said Stalin, "was to preserve peace and establish business relations with all countries."⁵ The chilly negotiations that Moscow conducted with the western powers over a European collective security pact and the low rank of the western representatives who participated in them only reinforced Stalin's feeling that France and Britain were not planning to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union to stop Germany's expansionist policies.

The first hint of change in Soviet policy came in the Soviet media, when it downplayed its attacks on Nazi Germany. In mid-April 1939 the official Soviet

newspaper *Izvestia* ceased publishing articles sent in by Ilya Ehrenburg from Paris criticizing Nazi Germany.⁶ On May 3, the Soviet commissar for foreign affairs, Maxim Litwinov, was dismissed from his job. Litwinov sought a pact with the western powers against Nazi Germany. His dismissal signaled a turning point in Soviet foreign policy concerning Germany and the western powers, since it was obvious to Stalin that Litwinov, who was Jewish, was not the right man to conduct a dialogue with Nazi Germany. Litwinov was replaced by Molotov. Litwinov's dismissal was welcomed by Germany, who considered him their number one enemy in the Soviet hierarchy and saw in the dismissal a sign that the Soviet Union was now ready to start talking.⁷

In May 1939 the German embassy in Moscow sent out hints to the Soviet Foreign Office over a possible alliance between the two countries. Assuming that the western powers would not declare war on Germany if they were not certain that they had the Soviet Union on their side, Germany was keen to prevent the Soviet Union from joining a pact with France and Britain. Germany assumed that if the western powers declared war, Germany would crush Poland within a few weeks and then be free to turn its forces on western Europe, without having to fight on two fronts, a war Hitler was most reluctant to engage in.

The negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union took place during the spring and summer of 1939, while the Soviets were discussing a possible defense pact with the western powers against Germany. The Soviet Union was in a position to decide which side would best serve its interests. The German foreign minister, Joachim Ribbentrop, sent a telegram to Molotov in mid-August reminding him that the western capitalist democracies were the relentless enemies of both the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany. By signing a military pact they were, once again, trying to drag the Soviet Union into a war with Germany.⁸

Stalin suspected that this was the aim of France and Britain. In an exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Stalin on August 20 and 21, it was agreed that Ribbentrop would come to Moscow to sign the agreements, most of whose contents were agreed upon in advance and the remainder were agreed upon during the visit.⁹

On August 23, 1939, the day after Ribbentrop's arrival in Moscow, a nonaggression pact was signed between Germany and the Soviet Union that went down in history as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. It included a mutual trade agreement and a commitment "to refrain from any belligerent action, and any attack on each other, either severally or jointly with other powers."¹⁰ A secret supplementary protocol determined a division of the spheres of influence in eastern Europe and the territory of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. In accordance with this division, the Soviet Union would receive the

territories of west Belorussia, west Ukraine, and parts of central Poland up to the river Vistula. It was agreed that Lithuania should come under Germany's sphere of interest, while Finland, Estonia, and Latvia would come under the Soviets' sphere of interest. As for Bessarabia, which was a part of Romania, the Russians expressed their interest there, while the Germans declared their lack of political interest in these areas.

The terms of the pact protected the Soviet Union from a German attack and made it possible for the Soviets to build up their army, which had been enfeebled by the widespread purging among the high command echelons in 1937–38. The Soviet Union was also granted large stretches of eastern Poland. Ideologically, a war between Germany and the capitalist states, which, according to Soviet estimates, would last for some years, would weaken both fighting sides and lay the groundwork for a communist expansion and Soviet rule of the whole of Europe. These were Stalin's strategic objectives, and World War II was supposed to provide the conditions for them to happen.

The pact supplied Germany with military freedom of action against Poland, and following a swift Polish surrender, it would restrict the war to a single western front in the case of British/French intervention. The economic pact made it possible for the Germans to receive from the Soviets raw materials for use in their military industries. It also supplied Germany with a border with the Soviet Union, whose geographic area was destined—according to Nazi ideology—to be part of the German nation's *Lebensraum*. Even after the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, Hitler did not abandon his intention to expand eastward and to destroy the communist state. For him the pact with the Soviet Union was a tactical measure and not a change of strategy. In his August 22, 1939, speech to his top-ranking army officers at the Berghof—as Ribbentrop was on his way to Moscow to sign the pact—Hitler announced his decision to attack Poland. As for the fate of eastern Europe, Hitler stressed in this speech that “Poland will be depopulated and settled by Germans. Russia will share the same fate. . . . We shall break with the Soviet Union, then there will be the dawn of German rule on earth.”¹¹

At dawn on September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. On September 3, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II began. On September 17, the Red Army crossed the Polish border. Within a few days, and with almost no resistance on the part of the Polish army, the Soviet Union had taken complete control of west Belorussia and west Ukraine, including the cities of Vilnius, Bialystok, and Lvov. The Soviet Union's official excuse for the invasion was that “since the Polish army had disintegrated . . . the Soviet government had ordered the supreme command of the Red Army to cross the Polish border

and to protect the lives and property of the populations of west Belorussia and west Ukraine.”¹²

On September 27, 1939, the day on which Warsaw surrendered to the Germans, Ribbentrop returned to Moscow in order to negotiate an agreement over the boundaries between the German-occupied territories and those occupied by the Soviet Union in Poland. An agreement was signed the following day, based on the August 23 agreement to which changes had been introduced. The Soviets relinquished a part of central Poland, where the border was moved from the Vistula to the Bug River; in return, Lithuania became part of the Soviet Union sphere of interest. Stalin reckoned that, strategically, Lithuania was more important to the Soviet Union than was central Poland. An additional agreement was signed allowing those Germans residing in the areas under Soviet control to migrate to Germany, while Ukrainians and Belorussians living in areas under German control would be able to relocate to Soviet territory.¹³

Once the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact had been signed, Germany's image underwent a complete change in the Soviet media. Much bandied phrases such as “fascist barbarians” or “fascist animals” disappeared from use, and Germany was now referred to as a peace-seeking country, as opposed to aggressive and warmongering Britain and France. Anti-German movies were removed from the cinemas, and anti-German literature disappeared from the bookstores and libraries. The entire propaganda machine was commissioned by the new political line, stressing the benefit that the pact would bring to the Soviet Union.¹⁴ The Soviet Union's favorable attitude toward Germany was expressed in Molotov's speech to the Soviet Supreme Council on October 31, 1939, in which he said that “the governing circles in Britain and France have been trying lately to present themselves as fighters against Hitlerism. . . . Germany is a country striving for the swift end to war and [to reinstate] peace, while Britain and France, on the other hand, . . . oppose peace.”¹⁵

In the Red Army, there was a new line in political propaganda. Stalin asked the chief commissar of the Red Army, Lev Mekhlis, not to “anger the Germans. . . . The *Red Star* makes frequent allusions to fascists and fascism. Stop doing it. . . . There's no need for Hitler to get the impression that we are only planning a war against him.”¹⁶

Soviet military publications carried the German version, according to which Poland had been the one to open fire at dawn on September 1, 1939, in order to take control of German territories.¹⁷ There was no open objection in the Soviet Union to the extreme change in foreign policy and the sudden sympathy for Nazi Germany. Following the wave of political purging that had swept the Soviet Union between 1936 and 1938, no one was brave enough to take an open stand against Stalin and his policies.

SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE BALTIC STATES, BESSARABIA, AND NORTH BUKOVINA

Under the new political and military circumstances created by the Germany-Soviet pact, and following the division of Poland, Moscow turned its diplomatic attention to reinforcing its hold on the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which according to the agreements were included in the Soviet sphere of influence, were forced to sign a mutual aid treaty with the Soviet Union in late September and early October 1939. In accordance with the agreement, the Soviet Union was given military bases in these Baltic states; in return, the city of Vilnius was handed over to Lithuania on October 28.

Demands similar to those made by the Soviets of the Baltic states were also made to Finland. Finland refused. On November 30, 1939, the Red Army invaded Finland, and the war between the two countries continued until March 13, 1940. Notwithstanding its numerical advantages, the Red Army was unable to prove itself against the small Finnish army and suffered heavy losses. In the end, however, the Red Army prevailed, and Finland was forced to sign a peace treaty, according to which it relinquished certain territories in the vicinity of Leningrad. Finland also had to give in to other Soviet demands, but managed to retain its independence.

In April 1940, Germany occupied Denmark and Norway; in May, the Germans occupied Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg. Their armored forces invaded northeastern France and moved toward Paris. Britain's expedition forces withdrew from Dunkirk to England via the sea. On June 10, Italy declared war on Britain and France. On June 22 France capitulated.

Since the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Soviet policy had been based on the assumption that the war in western Europe would be long and bloody and would result in the weakening of both sides, Germany and Britain/France. Germany's swift victory changed things. Germany now controlled most of the European continent. The Soviet Union was very concerned by these military developments. There was a fear that Britain, too, would fall, in which case, Germany would then be free to turn its forces against the Soviet Union. With the new situation in Europe, the Soviet Union acted to strengthen its position in the Baltic states. On June 14, 1940, an ultimatum was issued to the governments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, demanding permission for additional Soviet forces to enter their territories. They were also required to form Soviet-friendly governments. Even before receiving replies to their demands, the Soviet troops crossed the border and took control of the three Baltic states.

On June 26, 1940, the Soviets issued an ultimatum to Romania demanding

the annexation of Bessarabia and north Bukovina to the Soviet Union within twenty-four hours. The German ambassador in Bucharest advised the Romanian government to capitulate to Soviet demands. Romania was forced to surrender, and on June 28 the Red Army marched into Bessarabia and north Bukovina. By moving its borders hundreds of kilometers westward, between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, the Soviet Union had completed its expansionist plans and strengthened its position in east Europe.

4

The Jews in the Soviet Annexed Territories

DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 1931 census in Poland, 778,000 Jews lived in west Ukraine, and some 375,000 Jews resided in west Byelorussia.¹ Based on these data and taking into consideration demographic changes, it can be assumed that 1.225 million Jews resided in these areas in 1939 and constituted 10 percent of the population there. According to various estimates, this number grew when 300,000 Jewish refugees arrived from central and western Poland, fleeing the German occupation. The Jews in the Baltic states annexed to the Soviet Union numbered 220,000 to 225,000 in Lithuania, including the Vilnius area, 92,000 in Latvia, and 4,500 in Estonia.²

In the regions of Romania that were annexed to the Soviet Union, 207,000 Jews lived in Bessarabia and 70,000 to 75,000 in north Bukovina.³ In the absence of accurate data, the total Jewish population in all the territories annexed to the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1940 may be estimated at 2.12 to 2.15 million.

THE CHANGEOVER OF THE REGIMES

Once the Soviet army had crossed the eastern border with Poland, and during the few days of interregnum before the Soviet administration had managed to stabilize itself, certain areas in west Belorussia and west Ukraine experienced looting and anti-Semitic pogroms, especially in the regions of Volhynia and eastern Galicia.⁴

On their advance eastward, the German army took control of certain areas of east Poland that were handed over to Soviet rule after the German/USSR borders were determined. In some areas during this short period, the Germans murdered Jews. In Bialystok, which they occupied from September 16 to 22, the Germans

murdered about 100 Jews.⁵ In the city of Pszemyśl, the Germans murdered some 600 Jews before withdrawing to the other side of the river San.⁶

In Bessarabia and north Bucovina, the Red Army's arrival was accompanied by anti-Jewish riots on the part of the withdrawing Romanian troops, who blamed the Jews for sympathizing with the Soviets, their enemy.⁷

In west Belorussia and west Ukraine, the Jews welcomed the Red Army, even though they knew that the Soviets would do away with the national and religious institutions that had been established over generations. The Jews preferred the Soviets to the German alternative. A Jew who witnessed the entrance of the Red Army in Ternopol wrote: "The unexpected events were met by the Jewish population with mixed feelings. First of all there was a sense of relief, we were spared the agonies of Hitlerism. . . . The truth is that the communist regime also presented its own dangers, but these were of a different kind."⁸

For the Poles, the arrival of the Red Army constituted a knife in the back at a time when they were engaged in fighting the Germans and had lost their independence. Many Poles viewed the Jewish welcome of the Soviets as an act of hostility against Poland. They did not recognize that this reaction on the part of many Jews was due only to their fear of the Germans and not from hostility toward Poland. The only choice at that time in Poland was between German or Soviet occupation. Similar feelings and opposing interests between Jewish and non-Jewish populations prevailed in the Baltic states, in Bessarabia and north Bucovina, when they were occupied by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940.

THE "LEGALITY" OF THE SOVIET OCCUPATION

In an attempt to impart to the Soviet occupation a semblance of democracy and legality, and to differentiate it from the areas of German-occupied Poland, the Soviet authorities declared a general election for national councils on October 22, 1939. Under the slogan "We want annexation to the Soviet Union," there was only one party list, the communist and the nonaligned bloc. According to official records—which were not compatible with the truth—over 90 percent of the populace voted positively. Although they constituted 10 percent of the overall population, the Jews made up only 5 percent of the delegates to the national councils. Preference was given to the Belorussians and Ukrainians in drawing up the list of candidates. The elected councils had to ask the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union to annex west Belorussia and west Ukraine to Soviet Union. This "democratic" request was confirmed by Moscow in early November.

The Supreme Council of the Soviet Union issued a decree on November 29, 1939, that Soviet citizenship would be granted to anyone who was a resident

of west Belorussia and west Ukraine on the day of annexation; this included Polish refugees. Acceptance of Soviet citizenship was voluntary, and people were entitled to reject Soviet citizenship by claiming that they preferred to hold on to their Polish citizenship. However, they would then be discriminated against in employment and housing, and they would be in danger of deportation to the Soviet hinterland. The authorities reserved the right to refuse a passport.⁹

REFUGEES FROM THE GERMAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF POLAND

Already, in the first days of the German invasion, refugees started flowing from west and central Poland to the east of the country, in the hope that the German advance would be stopped there. Most of these refugees were Jews, aware of the anti-Jewish persecution in Germany. With the fall of Poland, the flow of Jewish refugees continued eastward to the Soviet-occupied territories. The exact number of refugees is estimated at around 300,000. Among the refugees were leaders of Jewish political party leaders, organized Zionist youth movement groups and yeshiva students, along with their rabbis.

The border between the German-occupied zone and the Soviet-occupied zone in Poland was officially closed in early November 1939, and anyone wishing to get across had to be smuggled at great risk. In some places the Germans expelled thousands of Jews over the border, along the rivers Bug and San, but the Soviets refused to accept them and sent the Jews back to the German zone. At the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a member of a group of 2,000 Jewish men expelled from the Chelm region in December testified, "It was before the river Bug. . . . When it grew dark they [the Germans] told us that we were to advance toward the border, where there was a bridge. . . . When we arrived at the Soviet side we were returned [by the Soviet border guards] to the area of general government. . . . At about 10 o'clock in the evening, the Germans turned up again and hurried us across the border."¹⁰

These expulsions resulted in conflict between the Germans and the Soviets. According to an internal memo from the general director of the German Foreign Ministry, Ernst Weizsacker, dated December 5, 1939, friction had broken out on the border between Russia and the General Government that involved the Wehrmacht in connection with the deportation of about 1,000 Jews to the Russian zone. A Soviet officer sent them back. When the Soviet Foreign Office brought up the deportation issue with the German ambassador in Moscow, Germany's Foreign Ministry intervened, and the expulsions ceased.¹¹

Escape of Jews to the Soviet territories continued through the winter of 1939–

40, but on a much smaller scale. The cold and the footprints in the snow made it easy for Soviet and German patrols to detect the people who tried to smuggle themselves over the border.

German emigration authorities suggested that the Soviet Union accept Jews from Germany. In a letter to Molotov, commissar for foreign affairs, dated February 9, 1940, E. M. Chekmenev, the man in charge of Soviet immigration, detailed the proposal: “[We] received two letters from the Emigration Offices in Berlin and Vienna regarding arrangements for the emigration of the Jewish population from Germany to the Soviet Union. . . . In accordance with an agreement between the Soviet government and Germany regarding the evacuation of population to Soviet soil, the evacuated are only Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Russians. We consider these proposals by the above-mentioned emigration offices to be unacceptable.”¹²

The Soviet government had always been suspicious of foreigners—and such were the refugees. According to a NKVD document regarding the large numbers of refugees, “along with the refugees, the Germans are also infiltrating their own agents. . . . Most of the people being smuggled across the border from Germany are inhabitants of the German-occupied territories . . . and Jews.”¹³

Parallel to the continuing stream of escapees from the German-occupied territories, there were also those refugees who, faced with unbearable loneliness and alienation, wished to reunite with their families left behind in these territories. Further, family members who remained in German-occupied areas wrote to their refugee relatives beseeching them to return to their homes. Against this background, thousands of Jewish refugees stole across the border and back into German territory.

The risks involved in smuggling people over the borders motivated many of the refugees to seek lawful ways for returning to their homes. In accordance with the September 28, 1939, German-Soviet pact, several repatriation committees were convened in west Belorussia and west Ukraine—each with a German representative—for registering *Volksdeutsche* wishing to return to Germany. Jews applied to these repatriation committees hoping for permission to reunite lawfully with their families. In his memoirs, Nikita Khrushchev, who was at that time first secretary of the Communist Party in the Ukraine, mentioned the curious fact of Jews wishing to return to the German zone. He wrote that Ivan Serov, head of the NKVD in the Ukraine, described to him the following scene: “There are long lines standing outside the place where people register for permission to return to Polish territory. On closer examination, I was shocked to see that most of these people in line were Jews.”¹⁴ A refugee registering with the repatriation office in Lvov described his motives for doing so:

The receipt of Soviet citizenship in April [1940] was accompanied by deep fears that I would be obliged to remain in Russia for ever, and that I did not wish for. Rumors spread about population exchanges between the Soviet and the German zones, which raised the hopes of many of the refugees, that they might be able to return to their families. I went to register. . . . In Lvov there were thousands like me. . . . We had no idea at that time that there was going to be mass annihilation of the Jewish people. In trying to return, I was influenced by two things: yearning and my concern for the family I had left behind in Krakow. . . . I kept blaming myself for being a coward, for running away and leaving them.¹⁵

Of course, the thousands of refugees who registered for repatriation had no way of knowing that the Germans had no intention of returning them to their homes and that their names were now listed in the NKVD as an anti-Soviet element to be taken care of at a later date.

THE CONCENTRATION OF REFUGEES IN VILNIUS

On October 10, 1939, it became known that the Soviet Union was placing Vilnius under Lithuanian rule. Many of the Jewish refugees, especially the leaders of Zionist parties and members of youth movements and yeshivas, moved to Vilnius before mid-November, when the border between the Soviet Union and Lithuania was closed. From then on, the only way to reach Vilnius was by stealing across the border. Altogether, between 14,000 and 15,000 Jewish refugees arrived in Vilnius.¹⁶ The refugees sought ways to get out of Lithuania, and the Zionists sought ways of obtaining immigration permits to Palestine. The Bund and other non-Zionist organizations were in contact with their counterparts in the United States, who tried to obtain immigrant permits for them. Exit from Lithuania was via the Scandinavian states and western Europe. But the Scandinavian route was closed down when Germany occupied Norway in May 1940 and subsequently the rest of western Europe. A new transition route from Lithuania appeared in April and May, when the Dutch consul granted entry visas to the Dutch-controlled Caribbean island of Curacao. The Japanese consul in Kaunas then granted the visa holders travel passes that allowed them to travel across Japan to Curacao. This route also required a travel visa from the Soviet Union, but Lithuania became a Soviet republic before this exit route could be opened. The new Soviet regime in Lithuania announced that it was closing all foreign embassies and consulates, but before this happened, several thousand Jews had been able to obtain various visas.¹⁷

A Jewish delegation appealed to the Soviet authorities in Lithuania with descriptions of the grim situation of the refugees from Poland and asked permission for those who had the visas to leave the Soviet Union. In August 1940, a positive reply came from Moscow, and some 6,500 were able to leave.¹⁸ In May 1941 the Soviet authorities stopped allowing Jewish refugees out of Lithuania.

SOVIETIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, EDUCATION, AND CULTURE

From the early days of occupation, the Soviet authorities began changing the capitalist economic system in the annexed territories to one that conformed with its own Soviet economic system. The banks, factories, and part of the lands were nationalized. Traders were forced to open their businesses, and the dearth of supplies meant that shops were soon emptied. Unable to obtain the necessary raw materials, artisans were obliged to close down shops. Although many Jews suffered from Sovietization of the economy, the government opened employment options that had hitherto been unobtainable to Jews, such as the civil service and militias; in these, some Jews even rose to senior positions, but they were gradually replaced by Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians who came from the Soviet Union.¹⁹

In west Belorussia and west Ukraine, the authorities called on the unemployed to volunteer for work in the mines and in industrial centers in other parts of the Soviet Union. Between November 1939 and February 1940, 40,000 to 50,000 workers had sought employment in these places; most of them were Jewish refugees from Poland.²⁰

The entire Jewish education system was disbanded and replaced by state schools. The only schools permitted to continue operating as state schools were those in which the language was Yiddish and the curriculum was compatible with that of the Soviet Union.²¹

The regime banned all existing Jewish newspapers, but in October 1939 a new Jewish paper was published, the *Bialystoker Stern* (Star of Bialystok). It was the only Jewish newspaper in the entire region of west Belorussia and west Ukraine.²² It served the communist ideology and made no mention of persecution of Jews in the German-occupied territories of Europe.

The Soviets banned all political and public activity unless it was communist.²³ Many of the leaders of Jewish political parties were arrested, including some of the refugees from German-occupied areas of Poland.²⁴

ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENTS AND UNDERGROUND ACTIVITY

The Zionist youth movements refused to comply when ordered by the Soviet authorities to cease their activity, as part of the decree to close down all noncommunist organizations. They went underground. This Zionist movement's underground was not anti-Soviet but aimed mainly at keeping the fires of Zionism burning and preventing Jewish youngsters from being tempted by communist propaganda. The Soviet authorities acted against the Zionist underground. In June 1941, several weeks before the German invasion of the Soviet Union, there was a wave of arrests and exile of people defined by the authorities as "anti-Soviet." Many of the underground Zionist youth movement members were among those arrested.²⁵

The NKVD and, later, the NKGB (People's Commissariat for State Security, which was established in 1941) kept close tabs on the underground activity of the Zionist youth movements and other Jewish parties and took steps against them. A comprehensive report by the chief of the NKGB's third department, Ivan Shevelev, described the activity of the Jewish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Belorussian underground movements. Regarding Jews, this document stated:

The Bund . . . with regard to the Soviet Union, took a Trotskyite, anti-Soviet stand. . . . In the western regions of Belorussia and the Ukraine, as well as in Soviet Lithuania, the Bund has developed anti-Soviet activity. . . . The Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia in Poland were influenced by the Zionist-Revisionist party—a Jewish fascist organization, to which a fascist Jewish youth movement, Betar, is subordinated. . . . In certain of their documents, the leaders of Betar have said that Betar members must assist British Intelligence in the event of the Soviet Union engaging in war with Great Britain and to help in subversive British activity in the Red Army's hinterland. Recently, Betar groups have been exposed and destroyed in certain cities in west Belorussia and west Ukraine. Another Zionist youth movement, Hashomer Hatza'ir, has set its goal as uniting all Jewish youth in the struggle for the establishment of an 'independent Jewish homeland' in Palestine. . . . The organization conducts anti-Soviet activity [and] prints illegal pamphlets. . . . Groups of Hashomer Hatza'ir members have been discovered in Lvov, Kaunas, Vilnius, Rovno, Bialystok, and other cities in the republics of the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Lithuania.²⁶

On June 15, 1941, one week before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, an additional document was published by the NKGB that presented data on subversive Zionist activity:

Security agencies in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Belorussia, and Moldavia uncovered a whole list of Zionist organizations. Intelligence activity led the NKGB in the district of Lvov to a group of Revisionist Zionists who had a radio station, grenades, and explosives, which they used to sabotage government objectives. The NKGB in the Latvian province interrogated the Zionists and . . . extracted information on the existence of an underground Zionist print shop in Vilnius which has produced fictitious documents, known as visas, supposedly issued by the British consul, for traveling to Palestine. . . . In 1940, NKGB in the province of Chernovtsy disbanded a Zionist organization, Hashomer Hatza'ir. . . . Zionist organizations have been uncovered in the Baltic states, Belorussia, and the Moldavian republic. . . . The NKGB in the Republic of Belorussia arrested 21 members of the underground Zionist organization known as "Freiheit" (freedom). . . . All the Jewish nationalist organizations used all means available to sabotage the Soviet regime. By maintaining close ties with the American JDC . . . they collected intelligence information which they passed on to the Americans. British Intelligence, too, made frequent use of the Zionists. The JDC has made financial allocations to the Zionists.²⁷

The accusations in this document about sabotaging government objectives and spreading anti-Soviet propaganda with the help of British and American espionage rings were lies on the part of the Soviet security services.

ARRESTS AND EXPULSIONS

From the earliest days of Soviet rule in the annexed territories, the authorities arrested people defined by the government as "unreliable elements." The NKVD and NKGB were responsible for handling these "unreliable," who included "all people who, because of their social and political past, their nationalist/chauvinist opinions, their religious awareness, and their moral and political instability, oppose the communist order."²⁸

Four waves of expulsions took place between February 1940 and mid June 1941, with each wave directed at people of a specific social status. The first involved Polish civil servants, landowners, and all ranks of officers and policemen. The number of Jews among these deportees was relatively small, but they included community and Jewish party leaders as well as a few army officers, mainly physicians. The April 1940 deportation included families of those who were deported in February, refugees, and asocial elements (e.g., prostitutes). A document that detailed the people who had to be included in deportations from west Belorussia and west Ukraine stressed "refugees from former Polish territories that were annexed to Germany, who have expressed their desire to leave the Soviet

Union and return to the territories now under German control.”²⁹ In June 1940, thousands of the Jewish refugees from Poland—regardless of their professional or social status—were expelled, including all those who had registered with the German committees for repatriation in the German-occupied territories and anyone who had refused Soviet citizenship. Between 180,000 and 200,000 Jewish refugees were expelled from west Belorussia and west Ukraine, out of 265,000 to 270,000 refugees who were there. These three waves included some 60,000 Jews from among the region’s permanent inhabitants. Altogether, some 240,000 to 260,000 Polish Jews were expelled to “old” Soviet Union.³⁰

The fourth wave of expulsions took place in mid-June 1941, about a week before the German invasion. This time the deportees consisted of people from the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and north Bukovina, and all those who had managed to evade the previous expulsions. The deportees included between 18,000 and 19,000 Jews (3,000 to 3,500 from Lithuania, 2,000 from Latvia, 500 from Estonia, 8,000 from Moldavia, and 5,000 from north Bukovina). They were sent to Altai, Komi, west Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Karelia.³¹

A lack of medical care and constant starvation led to an extremely high mortality rate among the deportees; it began in the deportation trains and continued with the awful conditions in their places of exile. Following an agreement signed in late July 1941 between the Polish government-in-exile in London and the Soviet Union, after the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, amnesty was granted to many of the exiled former citizens of Poland. But being refugees, without permanent dwellings and work, they continued to suffer in the terrible wartime conditions of the Soviet Union.

5

Preparations in Germany for the Attack on the Soviet Union and the Annihilation of the Jews

THE GERMAN ARMY AND THE “WAR
BETWEEN TWO OPPOSING IDEOLOGIES”

In July 1940, following the fall of France, Adolph Hitler made the decision to attack the Soviet Union. Britain, although alone and despite Hitler’s victories in Europe, rejected any agreement with Germany. Hitler believed that Britain was hoping for a German-Soviet war, which would change the overall military situation. On July 31, Hitler said, “Russia is the one element that England is relying on, so that once Russia is defeated, all England’s hopes will be dashed. The sooner Russia is defeated, the better.”¹ Apart from the assumption that a successful campaign against the Soviet Union would result in Britain’s agreement to negotiate peace, Hitler’s decision to attack was rooted in Nazi ideology of eastward expansion and the destruction of the Judeo-Bolshevist state.

The German army began preparing for the attack by moving large forces to the occupied territories in Poland and placing military units in Finland. On October 11, the German army, in agreement with Romania, entered there, “in order to protect the oil fields in Romania against British schemes.” All these were acts aimed against the Soviet Union.

On December 18, 1940, the OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, High Command of Armed Forces) issued Directive No. 21, “Operation Barbarossa,” the code name given to the planned attack on the Soviet Union, according to which “the German armed forces must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia, in a quick campaign even before the conclusion of the war with England. . . . Preparations are to be completed by 15th May, 1941.”²

By Hitler’s definition, the war with the Soviet Union was different from the wars he had waged against Poland, France, and the other countries in Europe. General Alfred Jodl, head of OKW operations, was ordered by Hitler on March 3,

1941, to prepare an appendix to the directive, “Special Orders to Directive No. 21 (Operation Barbarossa),” saying, “The forthcoming campaign is more than a mere armed conflict: it is a collision between two different ideologies. . . . The Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia must be eliminated. . . . Furthermore we must under all circumstances avoid allowing a nationalist Russia to appear in place of Bolshevik Russia.”³ This was the first document mentioning the destruction of Jews that was published as part of Germany’s preparations for its attack on the Soviet Union. It did not say that all the Jews had to be eliminated, only the Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia, but it was a step forward on the way of the involvement of the Wehrmacht in the murder of the Jews in the occupied territories of Soviet Union.

The OKW directive issued on March 13, 1941, said, “Within the area of army operations the Reichsführer ss will be entrusted, on behalf of the Führer, with special tasks for the preparations of the political administration, tasks which derive from the decisive struggle that will have to be carried out between two opposing political systems. Within the framework of these tasks, the Reichsführer ss will act independently and on his own responsibility. . . . Details will be worked out directly between OKH [Oberkommando des Heeres—High Command of the German Army] and the Reichsführer ss.”⁴

This document granted Himmler and the ss the authority to liquidate all elements belonging—in their opinion—to the Soviet “political system,” among them the Jews. These special tasks were placed in the hands of Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, or RSHA). Already, in September 1939, the Einsatzgruppen (Operations Groups) of the Security Police and the SD (hereafter Sipo) were operating in Poland against “hostile elements.” But there the army insisted on broad-scale expulsions of Jews, as planned by the ss, being carried out after responsibility for the occupied territories was handed over by the army to the German civilian administration.⁵ In the March 13, 1941, order, the army authorized the Einsatzgruppen and other ss units to carry out their criminal operations in the territories under its jurisdiction and control.

On April 4, 1941, General Quartermaster Eduard Wagner sent Heydrich the draft of an agreement (dated March 26), outlining the scope of cooperation between the army and the Einsatzgruppen in the forthcoming campaign.

The Sonderkommandos of the Security Police and SD carry out their mission on their own responsibility. They are subordinate to the armies in matters of the transport, provisions, and lodgings. . . . They receive their professional instructions from the Chief of the Security Police and SD. . . . For the central direction of these commands, a plenipotentiary of the Chief of the Security

Police and SD is appointed in the area of each army group. . . . The military commander is entitled to issue to the plenipotentiary instructions necessary for avoiding disturbances of the operations. . . . The Sonderkommandos are authorized within the frame of their assignment to carry out on their own responsibility executive measures concerning the civilian population.⁶

The meaning of this draft was that orders for Einsatzgruppen activity would be issued by Heydrich and that the Einsatzgruppen would be able to carry out their activities against civilian populations in areas under military authority and with logistical support from the army. The army commanders had the authority to cease Einsatzgruppen activity if this interfered with military actions. In late May 1941 (according to some sources, late April) an agreement was reached between the army and Heydrich, in principle identical with the draft sent by General Wagner on April 4.⁷ The military knew that the “special tasks” entrusted to Reichsführer SS on behalf of the Führer and the Einsatzgruppen operations would entail mass persecutions and the murder of civilians. This agreement made the German army party to the Einsatzgruppen criminal actions and thus responsible for them. Christopher Browning wrote: “With this agreement the military knowingly opened the way for the SS to carry out mass executions on Soviet territory. . . . The military leadership could have been in absolutely no doubt about the intended systematic murder of communists. Moreover, they knew that Hitler equated the Jews with Bolshevism.”⁸

The army not only enabled the Einsatzgruppen to carry out the murder acts but also participated. On March 30, 1941, Hitler convened 200–250 senior army officers to present his views on the course of the forthcoming war with the Soviet Union, which he defined as a “struggle between two opposing ideologies” and as a “war of destruction” (*vernichtungskrieg*). Hitler said that Soviet commissars and high officials had to be treated as criminals and not as prisoners of war. When captured, they must be handed over to the field sections of the Sipo, and when this was not possible, they must be shot on the spot.⁹

The OKW released three directives in the spirit of Hitler’s speech. A directive dated May 13, 1941, regarding military jurisdiction in the regions of Operation Barbarossa stated, “There is no need to punish members of the Wehrmacht and those belonging to them for crimes committed against enemy civilians, even if, at the same time, this act was a military crime.”¹⁰ Thus the army members were granted carte blanche to carry out acts of murder and cruelty toward civilians.

On May 19, 1941, the OKW issued its Special Orders Number I to Directive No. 21 (Operation Barbarossa), which, in an appendix titled “Behavior of German Forces in the Soviet Union,” said that “Bolshevism is a sworn enemy” and that “this struggle requires ruthless and energetic measures against Bolshevik pro-

pagandists, partisans, saboteurs, and Jews.”¹¹ In this directive, the German army grouped Jews with partisans and saboteurs, and it is quite clear that the fate of such in times of war is execution. The Jews were here defined as a concrete enemy that may endanger the German army. This definition had to serve as a justification for elimination and murder of the Jews, also by the army. The third document was issued by the OKW on June 6 and headed “Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars,” according to which the “Political Commissars . . . are the real bearers of resistance. . . . Therefore, when they are captured in battle or in the course of resistance, they are, as a matter of principle, to be eliminated immediately with a weapon.”¹²

These orders made it quite clear that the army toed Hitler’s line, according to which the war with the Soviet Union was not only military but also ideological and, as such, differed from all the other wars waged by Germany since September 1939. These orders gave legitimacy to the use of extremely brutal behavior toward civilian populations, prisoners of war, and Jews. On the whole, the senior officers of the Wehrmacht followed this anti-Jewish line. General-Colonel Erich Hoepner, commander of the Fourth Panzer Army, wrote on May 2, 1941: “The war against the Soviet Union . . . is the old struggle of the Germans against the Slavs . . . the warding off of Jewish Bolshevism. . . . No mercy should be shown toward the carriers of the present Russian-Bolshevist system.”¹³ For Hoepner it was clear who “the carriers of the present Russian-Bolshevist system” were—the Jews, and the meaning of “no mercy” in a “war of destruction” could include or be understood as the murder of them.

The Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, even without a clear and direct order from Hitler, by its directives and orders paved the way for the reign of terror in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union and the murder of Jews. The German historian Jürgen Förster wrote: “The difference between Operation Barbarossa and the campaign against Poland was that in the *Vernichtungskrieg* against “Jewish Bolshevism” the line between military and ideological warfare was erased before the first shot was fired. Racial politics and military strategy achieved a symbiosis.”¹⁴

THE EINSATZGRUPPEN: PREPARATIONS FOR THEIR MISSIONS

Following the May 13, 1941, directive, Sipo began recruiting and organizing the Einsatzgruppen (EG). The center for this activity was the Border Police school in Pretsch, near the German city of Leipzig, and in the surrounding towns of Duben and Bad-Schmiedeberg. Since the Sipo did not have enough men

at its disposal to form the Einsatzgruppen, most of these were recruited from other branches of the SS, mainly from the Waffen-SS and from the Order Police (Orpo). The man in charge of assembling and equipping the Einsatzgruppen was Bruno Streckenbach, the chief of Amt 1-Personnel in Heydrich headquarters. Each Einsatzgruppe was the size of an army battalion. The Einsatzgruppen's subunits were known as Einsatzkommando (EK), which were equal in size to an army company, and the Sonderkommandos (SK), which were each the size of a reinforced platoon. For purposes of identification, the Einsatzkommando were numbered from 1 to 12. In order to identify the Sonderkommando, they were given a number and a letter. The Einsatzgruppen were mobile, and their composition allowed for maximum operational flexibility. They were able to operate in larger units in the big cities and to split up, when necessary, and spread out over a large area and cover several places simultaneously. Most of the Einsatzgruppen commanders came from the ranks of the Sipo. The German historian Ulrich Herbert writes that two-thirds of the Sipo leadership, among them the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos, earned university degrees, nearly one-third held a doctorate, and they came from the middle and upper strata of German society. These were the people who directed the police forces and Einsatzgruppen who bore the responsibility for the organization of the mass murder.¹⁵ The Einsatzgruppen numbered around 3,000, according to the following breakdown:

Einsatzgruppe A: 990 members, under the command of SS Standartenführer Walter Stahlecker. Its subunits were SK 1a, SK 1b, EK 2, EK 3. It operated in the area of Army Group North, via the Baltic states, toward Leningrad.

Einsatzgruppe B: 665 members, under the command of SS Brigadeführer Arthur Nebe. Its subunits were SK 7a, SK 7b, EK 8, EK 9, and Vorkommando Moskau. It operated in the area of Army Group Center, via Belorussia, toward Moscow.

Einsatzgruppe C: 700–800 members, under the command of SS Brigadeführer Dr. Otto Rasch. Its subunits were SK 4a, SK 4b, EK 5 and EK 6. It operated in the area of Army Group South, via central Ukraine, toward Kiev and eastward.

Einsatzgruppe D: 600 members, under the command of SS Standartenführer Otto Ohlendorf. Its subunits were SK 10a, SK 10b, SK 11a, SK 11b, and EK 12. It operated in the area of the German Eleventh Army and Romanian armies, via Bessarabia and south Ukraine, toward Crimea and the Caucasus.¹⁶

Several changes in command took place within the Einsatzgruppen while they were active in the Soviet territories. Orders on the missions entrusted to the

Einsatzgruppen were issued verbally. One of the most disputed issues among historians for the last decades was when it was ordered to murder all Jews—before or after the invasion into the Soviet Union.

On June 17, Heydrich ordered the commanders of the EG and EK to come to Berlin, where he briefed them on the missions they were to carry out in the Soviet Union. Karl Jäger, commander of EK 3, who attended this briefing, testified that “there were around 50 ss officers there. . . . All I remember is Heydrich declaring that in the event of a war with Russia, it would be necessary for all the Jews in the east to be disposed of. I must point out that I don’t recall if he said ‘all the Jews’ or ‘the Jews.’”¹⁷

Dr. Walter Blume, who commanded SK 7a and was present at that meeting, testified that Heydrich had said “that in the imminent war with Russia, partisan warfare has to be anticipated, and that the region had a large Jewish population, which must be liquidated. He added that the Jews of eastern Europe—as a germ-cell of world Jewry—must be exterminated.”¹⁸

According to testimony given as a witness by Ohlendorf, commander of EG D, at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in January 1946, and as a defendant in the Einsatzgruppen Trial in Nuremberg in 1948, and in testimonies given by five indicted Einsatzgruppen officers at this trial, the order of killing all Soviet Jews was given by Streckenbach, at Pretsch, some days before the invasion, on behalf of Heydrich and Himmler. This was disputed at the trial by some other Einsatzgruppen officers who claimed that the order to kill all the Jews was given only in mid-August 1941, over six weeks after the invasion.¹⁹

Streckenbach returned in 1955 from his captivity in the Soviet Union. He denied that an order to kill all the Jews was given before the invasion. Some of the surviving EK commanders, who at the Einsatzgruppen trial supported Ohlendorf’s version, admitted after Streckenbach’s return that Streckenbach was right in his claim. The historian Alfred Streim writes that Ohlendorf had organized a conspiracy among the defendants of the Einsatzgruppen trial to give false testimony, as part of their legal defense strategy of imperative orders given before the invasion under which they carried out the killings, and most of the defendants joined this conspiracy.²⁰

It is obvious from the trial of Einsatzgruppen that their commanding officers received orders to murder Jews and communist activists in the territories of the Soviet Union, although it is not clear whether the reference was to “all the Jews,” meaning total annihilation, or if the word *all* was not said and it was left to the command staff of the Einsatzgruppen to act according to their understanding, in the very beginning of their activity. In a July 2, 1941, document to the “Higher ss and Police Leaders” (HSSPF-Hohere ss and Polizei Führer), Heydrich wrote:

In the following I make known briefly the most important instructions given by me to the Einsatzgruppen and the Einsatzkommandos of the Sipo and SD with the request that you adopt them. . . .

All the following are to be executed: Officials of the Comintern (together with professional communist politicians in general); top and medium level officials and radical lower level officials of the Party; . . . People's Commissars; Jews in Party and State employment, and other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, partisans, murderers, inciters, etc.). . . . If required Orpo participation to carry out police-security activity, it will be based on orders from commanders of the Einsatzgruppen or of the Einsatzkommando.²¹

In this document Heydrich stressed the superiority of the Sipo, which was under his command, as compared with other SS and police units, which were obliged to support them when requested. Further, he pointed out in that document that all dealings with anti-Reich elements, including the Jews, were under his authority.

Heydrich's document is the only one in writing which also refers to the verbal orders issued to the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommando. It says that the order given by him was to execute the Jews in Party or state employment. It strengthens the claim that the pre-invasion order did not include the murder of all the Jews. But it allowed the EG and EK commanders to decide who were the Jews in Party or state employment. It could include every male Jew of working age, since the communist economy was entirely state run, public or cooperative, and thus every Jewish worker could be included in Heydrich's definition. Practically, the Einsatzgruppen did not have the means to determine out who were the Jews in Party or state employment, among the masses of Soviet Jews that remained in the occupied territories. And until the middle of August, male Jews were murdered en masse, without distinction, whether they were in Party or state employment or not.

The clear priority given to the murder of Jewish men during the first weeks of the occupation was doubtlessly carried out in accordance with orders issued by Himmler and Heydrich, to the Einsatzgruppen and other SS and police units on the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. From the perpetrators' point of view, murdering Jewish men offered the following advantages:

They quickly got rid of Jews who might arouse resistance.

Murder of the Jewish men could be presented to the people who carried out the actual killings, to the military, and to the local population, as an elimination of the leadership strata of the "Judo-Bolshevik" state, against whom Germany was waging this war.

In order to maintain secrecy, all junior commanders below the rank of Einsatzkommando commander and their men received these orders only on crossing the Soviet border. At his trial Dr. Alfred Filbert, commander of EK 9, testified that he informed his subordinates of their missions—including the murder of Jews—only as they were crossing the border near Treuburg in east Prussia.²²

Although orders were delivered verbally to the Einsatzgruppen, they, in turn, were required to provide written reports on their activity. Heydrich established a special central bureau at the RSHA in Berlin, in which he collated all the security police reports from the occupied territories. The July 2, 1941, document also required other SS units to report to this bureau, in accordance with orders issued by Himmler. The Einsatzgruppen provided the Berlin bureau with reports on their location and activity. These reports were also delivered to the military commands in the regions in which the actions took place. The reports that reached the RSHA's central bureau were published daily as "Operational Situation Report—USSR" (Ereignismeldungen UdSSR). From May 1942, the daily reports were replaced by weekly "Reports from the Occupied Eastern Territories" (Meldungen aus des besetzten Ostgebieten).²³

Heydrich commanded the Einsatzgruppen, and they were answerable to him. This, however, was not their only command channel, since in regions under the command of the Army Groups North, Center, and South, as well as the rear areas, Himmler had appointed Higher SS and Police Leaders (HSSPF), who were subordinated directly to him. The HSSPF in Army Group North was Hans Prutzmann, in Army Group Center it was Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, and in Army Group South it was Friedrich Jeckeln. The HSSPFs were in charge of all the SS and police forces who operated in the areas under their command. In fact, their appointment created a double command channel in these areas, since in their day-to-day activity, the Einsatzgruppen were subordinated to Heydrich, but they also carried out orders issued by the HSSPFs.²⁴

In carrying out the "special tasks" with which Hitler entrusted Himmler, the Einsatzgruppen formed the spearhead of the SS forces, but they were not alone in this. The HSSPFs commanded units belonging to the Orpo and the Waffen-SS. The Orpo was also under the command of the Orpo Main Office in Berlin, headed by Kurt Daluege. The German Orpo consisted of regular police stations, as well as mobile police battalions, similar to regular army battalions, whose men were housed in camps and were responsible for maintaining law and order in the countries of occupied Europe.

Two Orpo brigades were formed in advance of the attack on the Soviet Union, each consisting of three battalions in order to operate in the areas of Army Groups Center and South. Apart from these brigades, eleven Orpo battalions were acti-

vated in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. These brigades and battalions received their orders from the HSSPF. At the start of the invasion, the Orpo battalions totaled some 17,000 men. Many of those serving in the Police and the Police battalions were reservists who had not been recruited into the army because of advanced age or imperfect health. In the autumn of 1939, some 26,000 younger volunteers were recruited into the police force because they preferred this kind of service over regular military service. Most of the Orpo regiments destined to operate in the Soviet Union were composed of these younger recruits.²⁵

Due to their limited number and the size of the occupied territories in which they had to operate, the Einsatzgruppen would not have been able to carry out their killing missions without the help of the Orpo forces stationed in cities or their mobile battalions.

Another force was established in preparation for the attack on the Soviet Union, which was under the direct command of the ss-Reichsführer (Kommandostab Reichsführer ss). This force included ss brigades 1 and 2 and the ss cavalry brigade, as well as auxiliary units. Some 19,000 men were under the command of Himmler's Kommandostab.²⁶

At the beginning of the war, 40,000 men, most of them ordinary Germans with no previous specifically Nazi background, made up the ss units that were destined to operate in the Soviet Union as part of Himmler's special task force and in carrying out regular police work. These "ordinary" policemen murdered Jews meticulously and without any scruples.

GERMAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Nazi Germany's military objectives in Operation Barbarossa were defined clearly in the orders issued by the OKW. Hitler's political objective of destroying the Soviet Union as a communist state, together with its Jewish-Bolshevist regime, was acceptable to the entire Nazi hierarchy, including the government, the military, and the ss. The basic assumption was that the war with the Soviet Union would be brief, and that following Germany's victory, the occupied territory would be handed over by the army to a German civilian administration. The first German administration that was to undertake the control of the occupied territories was the military administration, subordinated to Army General Quartermaster Eduard Wagner.

The territories under army rule were divided into Army Group Rear Area and the Army Rear Area, which was closer to the front line. Both the Army and Army Group Rear Areas were divided into Feldkommandanturen (FK, regional

commandanturas) and Ortskommandanturen (OK, urban commandanturas). These military commandanturas constituted the network of German military administration. The duty of the military administration was to maintain law and order in the rear areas, see that the army's logistical problems were solved without hindrance, and exploit the local economic potential for the army.²⁷

As part of the preparations for the invasion, the General Quartermaster issued directives to the Feldkommandants and the Ortskommandants regarding the treatment of Jews. As a model, they referred to the anti-Jewish sanctions taken in the General Government of Poland, which included counting the Jewish population, forcing them to wear a white ribbon or a yellow star, subjecting Jews to forced labor, establishing Jewish councils (*Judenrat*), and enclosing Jews in ghettos. Although similar to those taken in the General Government, these sanctions were carried out more brutally, both because of their extreme anti-Jewish propaganda within the army and because of the murderous Einsatzgruppen activity in the same regions.²⁸

According to the March 13, 1941, directive issued by the OKW, the German military administration had to hand over the regions that were far removed from the front to a political administration. This directive stated that the occupied area to the rear of the operation zone would have its own political administration, which would be divided ethnographically and follow the Army Group boundaries. In these areas, the political administration was to be transferred to Reich Commissars, who took their orders from Hitler.²⁹ Hitler entrusted Alfred Rosenberg in late March with preparing a plan for the establishment of German civil administration in the about-to-be conquered Soviet territories. Rosenberg proposed establishing four Reich Commissariats:

Reich Commissariat Ostland, to include the Baltic states, Belorussia, and parts of north and central Russia (Novgorod and Smolensk areas)

Reich Commissariat Ukraine, to include the Ukraine and areas of southern Russia up to the River Volga

Reich Commissariat Moscow, to include central and northern Russia

Reich Commissariat Caucasus

This division expressed Rosenberg's political concepts with regard to the fate of the Soviet Union. Following the "total annihilation of the Jewish-Bolshevist state," the Baltic states had to be annexed to Germany, the Ukraine had to be severed from Russia, and the Ukrainians were to be given some independence under German patronage, which should turn them into an anti-Russian factor. Russia had to be diminished and divided as far as possible, in order to avoid it

being of any future danger to Germany. The Caucasus had to be a multinational federation under the auspices of Germany.³⁰

The Reich Commissariats would be divided into administrative subunits, to be known as General Commissariats, that were to be split into further subunits and known as *Gebietskommissariat*—regions the size of a district or a large urban area. The civil administration in districts, townships, and rural areas, lower in rank than a *Gebietskommissariat*, were to be made up of local pro-German collaborators.³¹

In a speech to future key civil servants in the German civil administration, two days before the June 22, 1941, attack on the Soviet Union, Rosenberg laid out Germany's political objectives and policies for this war and pointed out the importance of German propaganda in stressing to the local population the "Jewish hold" (*Judenherrschaft*) over the Soviet Union.³²

Hitler entrusted Göring—who was responsible for Germany's "four-year economic plan"—with the economic exploitation of the occupied territories. In order to carry out the plan, the Economy Leadership Staff East (*Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost*) was established in March 1941 under Göring and included General Georg Thomas, head of the OKW's Office for Armament Economy (*Wirtschafts und Rustungs Amt*), among its members. According to the summary of a May 2 meeting headed by Göring on the economic exploitation of soon-to-be occupied territories of the Soviet Union, which was attended by top civil servants and General Thomas: "It is possible to continue the war into its third year only if there is a constant supply of food for the army from sources inside Russia. Obviously, if we take everything that is necessary for the [war] effort from this country, millions of people there will suffer from hunger."³³

On the eve of the attack, the Economy Leadership Staff East published a document titled "Rules for administering the economy in the newly occupied territories in the East" (it was coined the "green file"—"die Grüne Mappe"), which said that "in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union there had to be a complete confiscation of all available economic goods, which are important for Germany to continue the war. Highest priority had to be given to agrarian products. . . . We must ensure by all means the flow of supplies to the army by drastically confiscating all the goods and supplies in the occupied territories . . . and reestablish work in the industrial plants that serve the aforementioned objectives."³⁴

It is clear from these directives that the civilian populations in these territories were doomed to go hungry. However, this starvation policy did not stem only from the need to supply food to the German army during its war with the Soviet Union; it was a means to an end in its own right. According to German historian

Christian Gerlach, apart from the immediate objective of providing the German army with food, this was also a long-term objective because, once the war was over, those occupied territories, especially the Ukraine and southern Russia, were destined to become a permanent source of agricultural products and raw materials. By starving out the local population, especially those in the cities, and causing the deaths of many millions in the war, the Germans planned to reduce the need for food in these occupied territories, which meant more agricultural produce for Germany and its European offshoots.³⁵ Supplying the army with local food resources would also ease transportation problems from the Reich to the east and give priority to the delivery of munitions and fuel needed for the army.³⁶

The overall responsibility for economic exploitation in the areas of military administration was given to Quartermaster-General Wagner.³⁷ The “green file” made no specific reference to Jews, although some of its directives had an effect on their fate, especially in two areas. First the Jews, who were categorized by the Germans at the very bottom of the social pecking order, were destined from the very beginning to suffer dire starvation, to the extent of physical eradication. However, there was also an urgent demand for local manpower to serve the needs of Germany’s war economy. The Jews were able to supply part of these needs in manpower.

Before their invasion of the Soviet Union, the Germans defined the character and organization of the administration they planned to establish in the occupied territories, the tasks imposed on them, as well as their planned exploitation of these areas for their war economy. A large number of German authorities were destined to operate in these territories, including the military, the ss, the civil administration, and the Economy Leadership Staff East. This multitude of economic agencies caused conflicts among them. Dallin wrote: “Conflicts between the economic staffs and the administrative machinery were frequent. . . . Top level orders were issued not only by the *Wirtschaftsstab* itself, but also by the Four-Year Plan, the *Ostministerium*, the Quartermaster-General, and after September 1942 also by each of the armies in the field—often with significant differences in emphasis and intent.”³⁸

THREE

The German Attack on
the Soviet Union

6

Invasion under the Slogan “War on Judeo-Bolshevism”

GERMANY’S CONQUESTS UP TO LATE 1941

Nazi Germany began its sudden attack on the Soviet Union at dawn on June 22, 1941. The attack was conducted from four directions: Army Group North attacked through the Baltic states, and its target was Leningrad. This drive was supported by Finnish forces that joined the attack on Leningrad from the northwest. Army Group Center attacked through Belorussia, with Moscow as its chief objective; Army Group South attacked through Ukraine in the direction of Kiev and Kharkov. The Eleventh Army, together with the Romanian army, attacked via Bessarabia, along the northern coast of the Black Sea, its objectives being Odessa and the Crimean peninsula. Germany was counting on a brief war followed by a swift victory. As Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary on June 16, a few days before the invasion, “The Führer estimates that the operation will take about four months. I reckon on less. Bolshevism is going to crumble like a pack of cards.”¹

The Soviet army was surprised and unprepared for the German attack. Despite repeated warnings from his intelligence, Stalin had refused to give them credence.² Stalin had been convinced that Germany, wishing to avoid a war on two fronts, would not attack the Soviet Union before subduing Britain. He believed this would not happen before the summer of 1942, by which time the Red Army — then in the process of rebuilding itself and integrating new tanks and planes — would be stronger. Only at 00:30 hours on June 22, 1941, as a result of further warning of an imminent German invasion, did Stalin order the army to place the military regions bordering Germany under alert. This order reached the troops three hours after the Germans had begun their attack.

Stalin was so shocked by the sudden attack that the announcement to the Soviet nation about the German invasion which was broadcast over Radio Moscow at midday on June 22 was made not by him but by Molotov. On that same day, a

general mobilization was declared of all men born between 1905 and 1918. In the western regions of the Soviet Union, mobilization was conducted under fierce attacks from the air and simultaneously with evacuation of essential industries and government offices eastward. Nonetheless, by July 1, 1941, about 5.3 million soldiers had been mobilized, organized, and sent to the front.³ Stalin made his first speech to the nation on July 3. He justified the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact by claiming that it had given the Soviet Union almost two years of peace and time to rebuild the Soviet army, and he called for a partisan war in the German-occupied territories.⁴

The German armored forces penetrated deeply, shattered the Soviet defense lines in the west of the Soviet Union, and encircled entire Soviet armies. Hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers were taken prisoner. During the first month of the war, the German Army Groups advanced 400–450 kilometers to the north and reached the outskirts of Leningrad. German Panzer Divisions of Army Group Center advanced to a depth of 450–600 kilometers and reached Smolensk in mid-July on their way to Moscow. The advance of Army Group South into the Ukraine was slower, and it penetrated to a depth of 300–350 kilometers. The city of Odessa was besieged and cut off overland from the rest of the Soviet Union.

In August 1941, against the advice of OKH, Hitler ordered the main thrust that had been headed toward Moscow to be diverted southward—in order to help Army Group South capture the Ukraine—and northward toward Leningrad. By performing a giant encirclement operation, the German army captured Kiev on September 19, as well as large parts of the Ukraine; the Germans also took the Crimean peninsula, with the exception of the town of Sevastopol; on October 25 Kharkov fell to the Germans, and Rostov on the Don River fell on November 21. In the north, the Germans' attempt to take Leningrad failed, but they closed it in from all directions.

The German army renewed its attack on Moscow in early October. Stubborn resistance on the part of the Red Army, extremely long supply lines, and heavy losses on the German side, together with the heavy rains and the early arrival of winter that year, forced the Germans to stop the attack. Hitler's plan to capture Moscow and Leningrad before the onset of winter failed. The Germans were forced to prepare for a lengthy campaign, with all its logistical problems, among them, providing the soldiers with winter clothes. This new reality, as related in following chapters, was to affect the fate of the Jews in some regions of the occupied territories and the pace at which they were annihilated.

The Red Army suffered heavy losses. According to Soviet sources, by the end of 1941, almost 4.5 million soldiers had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner by the enemy.⁵ Nonetheless, the Red Army was able at the beginning of December

to open a counteroffensive in the Moscow area, which continued until the end of March 1942. The counteroffensive succeeded in liberating the towns of Kalinin, Kaluga, and others. The Red Army advanced westward and reached the vicinity of Velikiye Luki, north of Vitebsk, and succeeded in recapturing the city of Rostov, in the south, by the end of November 1941. The Moscow counteroffensive was Germany's first big defeat in World War II; tens of thousands of German soldiers lost their lives, and more were wounded or were taken prisoner by the Soviets.

A WAR AGAINST "JUDEO-BOLSHEVISM"

The war was accompanied by a well-focused German propaganda campaign. In a diary entry dated June 5, 1941, Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels wrote, "Rules for propaganda in Russia: Not against Socialism, there is to be no return to the Czarist [regime], not to talk openly about destroying the Russian state, this will turn the army—which is mainly Russian—against us. We must condemn Stalin and the Jews behind him."⁶

According to a secret document issued by the OKW's propaganda department in early June 1941, under the heading "Propaganda Instructions for Operation Barbarossa," "It is still impossible to determine the final trends for engaging in a propaganda campaign in the Soviet Union. . . . What can at this time be stressed is that: a. The enemies of Germany are not the nations of the Soviet Union but the Judeo-Bolshevist Soviet regime, its activists, and the Communist Party. . . . b. Germany is not coming as 'the enemy of the local population.' And furthermore, the population will be liberated from Soviet tyranny."⁷

The war against the Jews and presentation of the Soviet Union as a Judeo-Bolshevist state was the main slogan in German's war propaganda, which was aimed simultaneously at the German nation, the Soviet population, and the Red Army. Hitler's announcement to the German people on the war with the Soviet Union, which Goebbels read over Radio Berlin on the morning of June 22, 1941, went thus:

German people . . . a well-known conspiracy has been formed between the Jews and the Democrats, between Bolsheviks and Reactionaries, with a single objective—to prevent the establishment of a new national German state. . . . The German nation has never borne any hostility toward the nations of Russia . . . but the rulers of Judeo-Bolshevist Moscow have tried endlessly to impose their regime on our people and on other European peoples. . . . The hour has come when it is necessary to take a stand against the conspiracy of warmongering Jews and Anglo-Saxons and against the Jewish rulers of the Bolshevik center in Moscow.⁸

Thus Hitler presented the attack on the Soviet Union as a war of defense against Judeo-Bolshevist conspiracies. A German announcement, published on the first day of war, directed to the Soviet people and the Red Army, was dropped from the air in the form of pamphlets and broadcast over the radio:

People of the Soviet Union! You placed your faith in criminals, who, under the leadership of Jews from all over the world, have flooded your motherland. . . . You have been thrown into a dictatorship under Trotsky, Zinoviev, Mekhlis, Kaganovitch, and others of Lenin and Stalin's partners in crime. . . . The gang of Jewish journalists from *Pravda* and *Izvestia* are deceiving you daily. . . . Get rid of the Jewish commissars. . . . The Germans will liberate you from Judeo-Bolshevist terror.⁹

All propaganda in the Russian language referred to the Jews as "Zhids," a derogatory term in Russia, rather than the term "Yevrei," as used in the Soviet Union. The first pamphlet after the invasion appealed to soldiers and officers of the Red Army to desert and defect to the German side and contained the principle that guided German propaganda:

The Jewish-Communist government, under the leadership of Dzhugashvili-Stalin, has violated its agreements with Germany. This is what has caused the war. . . . You have been turned into the slaves and vassals of Stalin and his Jewish commissars. . . . The patriots of your nation were shot mercilessly by the Jewish regime. . . . Send the Jews and the Communists to hell! Together, we shall march toward Moscow and Kiev. With friendly effort, together we shall liberate the Soviet Union from the burden of Communism [and] from the damned Jews. . . . Only when the head of the Jewish Comintern is removed will peace reign in Europe and in your country.¹⁰

Another pamphlet, "Transfer Permit," called on the Red Army and its commanders to desert: "Out of a desire that no further blood be shed in vain on behalf of the Jews and Commissars, the holder of this permit is leaving the defeated Red Army and is passing over to the German armed forces. The German soldiers and officers will give him a warm welcome, feed him, and arrange employment for him."¹¹

A German propaganda pamphlet distributed in the occupied territories, which was obviously published shortly after the outbreak of war when the German army was at its victorious peak, was supposed to have been written on Stalin's behalf and presented him in a ridiculous light. The pamphlet claimed that the Soviet Union was in a desperate state and that Stalin was obviously under the control of Jews:

Comrades! Workers and farmers in the German-occupied territories! My marshals have been beaten by the German army. . . . The end of bolshevism is close. . . . What are my bosses—Mr. Kaganovich and all the Jewish gang in the Soviet Union—going to do? . . . Comrades, keep fighting! . . . We promise to return you to the kolkhoz . . . to the gentle care of our NKVD. . . . Forward, comrades!

SIGNED: General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, J. Stalin.¹²

By mid-October, 336 million pamphlets had been distributed along the Soviet front, and this was in addition to radio and loudspeaker propaganda, in which broad use was also made of the term *Judeo-Bolshevism*.¹³

The Germans also made use of prisoners of war and deserters. The deserters, especially the officers, called their fellow soldiers in the frontline units to defect to the German side. Some Soviet officers were subsequently returned by the Germans to their former units, especially when these were encircled, in order to persuade their men to surrender. In October 1941 the deserter Colonel Tichonov was returned to the besieged forces in the Viazma region, where he persuaded two battalion commanders to surrender, along with their 1,500 soldiers. The brigade's third battalion refused to surrender; its commander was a Jew.¹⁴

As the war progressed, German propaganda changed its emphasis. When the Germans realized that propaganda against the commissars, politruks, and members of the Communist Party and Komsomol was making the Soviet army units more determined to fight and not to surrender, they changed their slogans to promises that Germany would treat them no differently than it was treating other prisoners of war. But throughout the war, the anti-Judeo-Bolshevist line in their propaganda remained constant.¹⁵

The propaganda tactic that called for Soviet partisans to cease fighting also had an anti-Jewish motif: "Stalin, . . . that obedient bridegroom of the Jew Lazar Kaganovich, who, having slaughtered and exploited it for twenty-five years, has suddenly discovered the motherland. . . . Liberate yourselves from the Jewish poison. . . . Move over to us with the call, 'Stalin is destroyed!'"¹⁶

No research has been done on the extent to which the Red Army soldiers were affected by German propaganda, so there is no data as to how many of the 3 million Soviet soldiers who fell prisoner to the Germans by the end of 1941 had been forced to surrender because of military defeat or had deserted as a result of German propaganda, or a combination of the two.¹⁷ Considering the inherent popular anti-Semitism that also infected Red Army soldiers, it is fair to assume that this, too, had its effect on the decision to desert or to surrender.¹⁸ German propaganda was more effective during the first months of the

war, when the Red Army suffered defeats, but as the Soviets' situation improved, the German propaganda machine became less effective. German propaganda did, however, have a profound effect on Jewish soldiers and their determination to continue fighting and not to surrender. A Jewish soldier from the infantry division on the Ukrainian front recalled how, when they were on the defensive against a German attack in the autumn of 1941, a Ukrainian fellow soldier turned to him and said, "You should be scared. I can be taken prisoner. You can't."¹⁹ Jewish soldiers knew from propaganda pamphlets how true this was and what they could expect if they were taken prisoner by the Germans. A Jewish soldier fighting in besieged Leningrad during the autumn of 1941 wrote that "during the dark evenings, German loudspeakers were belting out calls to 'beat the Zhids and the commissars.'" The soldier recalled that six of his comrades had deserted to the German side. Another Jewish soldier fighting on the northern front remembered German planes dropping pamphlets from the air with the slogan "Strike the Jewish-Politruk." The soldier collected and burned some of the pamphlets, but a Russian soldier from his platoon read the pamphlet to other soldiers and agreed that "what it says is true, the war is all because of the Jews, it's a well known fact."²⁰

The Soviet Union did not respond to the Judeo-Bolshevik slogans in German propaganda. The historian Isaac Deutscher wrote:

During the war, when Hitler's propaganda vituperated against 'the Jewish war and the Jewish commissars' . . . and called the Russians and the Ukrainians to rise against them, Stalin's propagandists countered with nothing better than embarrassed silence. He forbade them to reply with a counter-blast that would expose the dreadful inhumanity of Hitler's anti-Semitism. He feared . . . that it would make him appear in the role of a Jews' defender. . . . He was frightened of the popular appeal of anti-Semitism, and the eagerness with which the Russian and Ukrainian Jew-baiters, in occupied areas, responded to Nazism confirmed him in his fear.²¹

Notwithstanding Nazi propaganda slogans regarding the war with the Soviet Union being a war against Judeo-Bolshevism, this was not Germany's main objective. In this war Nazi Germany also had some other objectives to fulfill, such as its aspirations to "spread eastward" and, with it, to carry out a massive German colonization of those territories, subjugating the local population and exploiting the region economically. The destruction of the Soviet state and Judeo-Bolshevism combined nicely with Germany's strategic and ideological aims. The Germans concealed its expansionist plans, since these were liable to unite the Soviet people against them. On the other hand, emphasizing the war on Judeo-Bolshevism as

the main objective of this war served German propaganda both among much of the Soviet people and the Soviet army.

Although German propaganda about the war on Judeo-Bolshevism made no open mention of a total liquidation of the Jews, it did create an atmosphere and laid the foundations for carrying out such a plan. This propaganda slogan supplied the German administration in the Soviet-occupied territories, such as the SS, the army, and the civil authorities, with the ideological justification for a policy of annihilating the Jews.

7

Evacuation of the Soviet Population Jews in Organized and Individual Evacuation

ORGANIZING THE EVACUATION

Two days after the German invasion, on June 24, 1941, the Soviets established an “evacuation council” whose task it was to evacuate government and Communist Party offices and industrial plants in the areas under threat of occupation. On June 27, criteria were determined for the evacuation:

Essential industrial plants (equipment and machinery), raw materials, food, and other valuable materials.

Professional workers, engineers, clerks employed in the plants being evacuated, military-age youngsters, senior civil servants, and party functionaries.

All valuable property, raw material, and supplies that cannot be moved and that the enemy could make use of must be destroyed, liquidated, and burned.¹

A directive was issued on July 3 to evacuate vocational school students and to move all livestock and tractors from the kolkhozes and sovkhozes.²

The council defined the entire range of details relating to the evacuation program: areas from which evacuation would be carried out, schedules, means of transport, places to which factories, offices, and people were to be transferred, and responsibility for integrating them in their new locations. Evacuation councils were established in the republics in danger of enemy occupation, and these, as well as local government authorities, were given responsibility for the practical implementation of the evacuation. Points of exit and destination were established to supply the evacuees with accommodation, food, and medical attention along the way.

The evacuation council followed instructions issued by the Communist

Party's Central Committee, the government, and the State Defense Committee (Gosudarstrennyi Komitet Oborony—GKO), which was formed on June 30, 1941, and headed by Stalin. It was decided on July 5, 1941, to give the military command power of decision about evacuating civilians from battlegrounds or areas in danger of enemy occupation. In areas that were badly hit by air attacks, the decision on evacuation would be in the hands of the evacuation council. The Evacuation of Population Authority was established as late as September 26, 1941, to deal with the evacuation of people, mainly children, from densely populated regions that were under artillery and air attacks, such as Moscow and Leningrad.³

The Soviets had prepared no evacuation plans prior to the outbreak of war, and thus, in the midst of the German advance, under chaos and air attacks, they were faced with the necessity of planning and improvising the relocation of thousands of industrial plants essential to the war effort and millions of people. The State Defense Committee issued orders to “keep up production” to the very last moment.⁴ So many industrial plants kept postponing the disbanding of their facilities until the enemy was very close, and sometimes it was too late to do so. Evacuation was delayed in part because of a reluctance to spread panic by announcing that the region was about to be occupied; at the same time, the authorities continued with optimistic broadcasts.

Decisions to evacuate had been taken during the first weeks of the war, but several months elapsed before the system began working efficiently. Between July and November 1941, 1,523 factories were relocated, mostly to the regions of the Volga, the Urals, and central Asia. By giving a broad interpretation to the directives, the authorities also evacuated cultural institutions such as theaters (with their entire staff), museums, archives, and research institutes.⁵ By the end of 1941, 12 million people had been evacuated, and by then the German advance had been stopped.⁶ A more limited evacuation was carried out during the summer and autumn of 1942, as the German army advanced toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

THE JEWS IN EVACUATION

Soviet sources did not distinguish the evacuees according to nationality, so no record exists of the number of Jews. The general evaluation of the number of Jews evacuated and escaping from the Nazi-occupied areas is based on the prewar population census and an analysis of the conditions and dates on which the evacuation took place and a comparison of these with German reports and some Jewish sources, which contain information on the number of Jews who remained and were murdered under German occupation.

Jews were given no special mention in the evacuation orders, despite the fact that the Soviet authorities were aware of the anti-Jewish persecutions in Nazi Germany, Poland, and other parts of occupied Europe.⁷ However, it is worth mentioning that while they were determining their priorities for evacuation of civilians from war zones, the authorities were still unaware that the Nazis were carrying out the total annihilation of the Jewish people. But many Jews were evacuated along with the institutions and factories in which they worked. Their ability to escape by any means other than official evacuation depended on the information and awareness of what they could expect under German occupation as well as having sufficient time and available means of transport before the Germans' occupation of the region.

The Jews who lived in areas annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940 knew about anti-Jewish persecution following Hitler's rise to power from the media and from testimonies of other Jews who had managed to escape from Germany. However, Jews in the old territories of the Soviet Union received little information from the Soviet media about the persecutions in Germany. And once the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact had been signed, even this limited information ceased. Anatoly Kuznetsov, who witnessed the murder of the Jews of Kiev, testified:

When the [expulsion] order was first published, nine Jews out of every ten had never heard a word about any Nazi atrocities against the Jews. . . . Right up to the outbreak of war Soviet newspapers had been doing nothing but praising and glorifying Hitler . . . and had said nothing about the position of the Jews in Germany and Poland. . . . The older men used to tell stories about the Germans in the Ukraine in 1918; how they hadn't touched the Jews then, but on the contrary had treated them decently.⁸

Their memories of the German occupation in 1918, when the Jews were not discriminated against, were among the reasons for many Jews, especially the older ones, to opt against leaving their homes.⁹ When, during the early days of the war, an elderly couple from Chashniki, south of Vitebsk in Belorussia, were offered evacuation, they declined, claiming that "the Germans had not harmed them in World War I, and they would not do so now. And, anyway, where would they go? After all, they had a farm with chickens and cows and sheep."¹⁰ And as a Jew from Volhynia wrote in his diary on June 25, "It is as if something is whispering in my ears; escape to Russia . . . something very tragic is about to happen here . . . the murder of Jews. . . . But then another voice, a voice of cold reason, says . . . what do you mean, murder . . . murder of people, just like that? No doubt there will be restrictions, sanctions, like in occupied Poland."¹¹

The Jews of the Soviet Union were the first against whom Germany carried out its policy of total annihilation and, although this policy started immediately with the German invasion, it was several months before the Jews actually internalized the fact that, under German occupation, they were all doomed to die. By this time, large areas, home to many thousands of Jews, had fallen into German hands.

Because it was a punishable offense in times of war to desert a place of work without official permission, many Jews were reluctant to try to escape while they were still able to do so. By the time the local Soviet authorities had made their escape, it was usually too late for others to follow suit. Thousands of escapees were killed or wounded in German air attacks along the escape routes, and many of them, on encountering routes blocked by German forces, returned to their homes, while others remained in townships along the way.

EVACUATION AND ESCAPE FROM THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES

Between 2.12 and 2.15 million Jews, including refugees from the occupied territories in Poland, resided in the territories annexed to the Soviet Union.¹² Most of these territories were taken during the first ten days of the German invasion, and the swift advance of occupying forces, together with the general chaos, made conditions for evacuation extremely difficult. Members of the political establishment and their families had been the only ones to be evacuated by road and rail a few hours or days before the German occupation. Others, including Jews (mainly young), made their escape on foot or by any available means of transport. The old Soviet border had remained closed even after the annexation of west Belorussia and west Ukraine, and a special permit was required in order to get across. During the first days after the invasion, Soviet guards in certain border regions continued to demand these permits, and thousands of refugees were detained for days in railway stations or fields before being allowed across, whether because of orders from above or because the guards made their own escape from the approaching Germans and left the border crossings open.¹³

Some 1.6 million Jews lived in west Belorussia and west Ukraine, including the area around Vilnius, and between 240,000 and 260,000 of them (mainly refugees) had been exiled to the Soviet Union. Around 20,000 or 25,000 of those who had volunteered to work in the Soviet Union remained there. During the second half of 1940 and the spring and summer of 1941, all the 1917 to 1922 age groups were called up for military service, including 30,000 Jews. A little over 10,000 Jewish refugees left the Soviet Union, mostly via Vilnius, and some of them returned to

the German-occupied area of Poland. On the eve of the invasion in June 1941, an estimated 1.27 to 1.30 million Jews lived in the former Polish regions annexed to the Soviet Union.

The German advance was swift, and west Belorussia was captured by the end of the first week of war. Minsk was captured on June 28. The stronger resistance encountered by the German army in western Ukraine slowed down its advance in that region. Some data is available on the numbers of evacuees and escapees from Volhynia, most of which was occupied during the first week of war. Around 5 percent of Volhynia's 250,000 Jews either escaped or were evacuated.¹⁴ Since conditions in west Belorussia and west Ukraine were similar to those in Volhynia, it may be assumed that about 5 percent of the Jews escaped from these areas, in other words, 60,000 to 65,000.

Between 355,000 and 390,000 Jewish former citizens of Poland lived in the Soviet Union, including those who had been there before the German invasion.¹⁵ This is compatible with the estimated number of former Polish Jews who survived the war.¹⁶ At the beginning of the German occupation, between 1.20 and 1.23 million Jews remained in regions of west Belorussia and west Ukraine.

Some 250,000 Jews lived in the Baltic states on the eve of World War II. The German army captured Lithuania and Latvia within seven to ten days of the invasion; Kaunas fell on June 25, and the capture of Daugavpils (Dvinsk) in Latvia on June 26 cut off the main escape route from Lithuania; on July 1, Riga fell to the Germans.

Of the 150,000 Jews who lived in Lithuania, within pre-World War II borders, among them 3,000 refugees, on the eve of the German invasion, between 2,000 and 2,500 Jews were expelled to the Soviet Union. Some 8,500 Jews escaped from Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Many hundreds were killed on the way by air bombings and encounters with Lithuanian anti-Soviet elements. Around 138,000 to 140,000 Jews (excluding those in Vilnius) remained under German occupation. The total number of Jews who remained in Lithuania—including the Vilnius area—under German occupation is estimated at between 203,000 and 208,000.¹⁷

Of the 92,000 Jews who resided in Latvia, 2,000 had been expelled to the Soviet Union before the German invasion. Because of the shorter escape routes and the fact that the area was occupied a few days later, about 14,500 to 15,000—including those mobilized into the army—were evacuated or managed to escape from Latvia.¹⁸ Between 74,000 and 75,000 Jews remained in German-occupied Latvia.

Estonia was the last of the Baltic states to fall to the Germans. Its capital city, Tallin, which was home to most of the country's Jews, was captured on August

28, 1941. About 2,500 of Estonian's 4,500 Jews were evacuated into the depth of Soviet territory, and some 500 had been expelled to the Soviet Union before the German invasion. Between 1,200 and 1,500 Jews remained in Estonia under German occupation.¹⁹

The fact that the German and Romanian armies' advance in Bessarabia was slower than in other parts of the front allowed a relatively large number of Jews to get away. Kishinev was occupied only on July 16, 1941. Already, at the beginning of July, the authorities had decided on the evacuation of government offices, and thousands of Jews started moving toward the river Dniestr. Of the 200,000 Jews estimated to have been in Bessarabia at the time of the German invasion, some 35,000 to 40,000 escaped, were evacuated, or were drafted into the army. Between 160,000 and 165,000 Jews remained in German-occupied Bessarabia.²⁰

North Bukovina was occupied within two weeks of the outbreak of war—quicker than Bessarabia. By July 5, the German army entered Chernovtsy. Conditions for evacuation and escape were similar there to those in west Ukraine. The number of Jews residing there at the time of the German-Romanian invasion stood at between 70,000 and 72,000; the number of evacuees and escapees may be estimated at 3,500 to 4,000. Some 67,000 Jews remained in German-occupied north Bukovina.²¹

As an overall estimate, the number of Jews in the annexed territories who remained under German occupation was between 1.64 and 1.72 million and those who were exiled or evacuated or who escaped numbered some 425,000 to 470,000.

EVACUATION AND ESCAPE FROM THE OLD TERRITORIES

Some 2.12 million Jews resided in the old Soviet Union territories that the Germans captured before the end of 1941. These numbers are based on the January 1939 population census, with an additional 2.35 percent to account for natural increase in population, up until the German invasion. This community formed two-thirds of the Soviet Union's Jewish population.

Military Service

In order to estimate the number of Jews who were evacuated or who escaped from the areas captured by the Germans up to the end of 1941, it is necessary to also examine the number of Jews who served in the regular army and those who were mobilized at the outbreak of war. According to estimates, 3.4 percent of the Jewish community (72,000 men) served in the 1919–22 regular army-year

I. SOVIET JEWISH POPULATIONS IN THE
OLD TERRITORIES, JUNE 1941

ZONE	DATE OF OCCUPATION	PROVINCES	NUMBER OF JEWS	PERCENTAGE OF SOVIET UNION'S JEWISH POPULATION
A	June 28– July 31	Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Smolensk, Zhitomir, Kamenets– Podolsky, Vinitza, western Kiev province (excluding the city of Kiev)	763,000	24.6
B	August– September	Nikolayev, Tiraspol, Gomel, Kiev (town and eastern province), Polesie, Kirovograd, Dnepropetrovsk, Chernigov, Odessa province (excluding town of Odessa), Poltava	728,000	23.3
C	October– November	Zaporozhe, Sumy, Odessa (town), Kharkov, Crimea (excluding Sevastopol), Kursk, Orel, Kalinin	627,000	20.2
TOTAL			2,118,000	68.1

groups. All Jewish males born between 1905 and 1918 (excluding the estimated 20 percent who were exempted on medical grounds, workers in the armament industry, etc.), were mobilized on the first day of the war; this constituted 11.4 percent of the Jewish population. Around 230,000 Jews living in the above areas were mobilized during the first days of the war. According to this estimate, 300,000 Jews served in the army at the outbreak of war, including those who had served before the war. The number of Jews in the territories captured up to the end of 1941, excluding those recruited into the military, stood at 1.8 million.²²

Evacuation from Zone A

Conditions for the evacuation of Zone A, especially its western parts, were extremely difficult. Germany's main thrust was directed at Moscow and the route to Moscow passed through Belorussia, most of which had been captured during the first weeks of war. Already, on the night of June 25, three days before the occupation of Minsk, all the Soviet Belorussian leadership had secretly escaped to Mogilev; they had made no provisions for evacuating the population, nor even informed the population of the disastrous situation, which became clear only on June 26. But, by then, the Germans were already upon the town, and most escape routes were blocked. About 7,000 of Minsk's 72,000 Jews were evacuated or managed to escape in time.²³ Vitebsk, home to some 38,000 Jews, fell on July 11. The evacuation of industrial plants had begun on July 1, but evacuation of civilians began only on July 7. Around 22,000 Jews were evacuated or escaped Vitebsk, constituting 58 percent of the town's Jewish population.²⁴ Bobruisk, southeast of Minsk, had already been taken on June 29, and an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 of the town's 27,300 Jewish inhabitants—25–30 percent—managed to escape.²⁵

In many places the authorities mobilized all available manpower to work on fortifications, thus preventing people from escaping in time. Also, the authorities withheld information on the advance of the German army, as witnessed by an inhabitant of Gorki in the province of Mogilev:

On July 12, the day on which the Germans entered Gorki, . . . people set off for work as usual and the radio broadcast that fighting was going on in the Bobruisk area, which is a significant distance from us. No one expected them to turn up in Gorki. . . . It transpired that the local government authorities had already left that morning. . . . That same day, there began a stampede of people. . . . Some who went in the direction of Gory were stopped. Those who took the other direction made it.²⁶

The situation was similar in many other places where the authorities withheld information from the inhabitants. Escaping Jews were subject to attacks from

criminals and local hooligans. As a youth from the township of Beshenkovichi in the province of Vitebsk testified, “A group of us Jews—mainly young—got together to escape from the town. . . . About 20 kilometers out of town, the Germans caught up with us. We decided to turn back. On the way, we were attacked by locals hooligans, who grabbed our suitcases and our coats.”²⁷ The situation was similar in the Ukraine, according to the testimony of a young woman from the township of Grichev in the Kamenets-Podolsky province: “My father was manager of a sugar beet factory and was on duty until the very last moment. . . . Father was given verbal notice that [we] had to evacuate. . . . We set off at dawn on a horse-drawn cart. . . . We arrived at Lyubar in the Zhitomir province, where the Germans cut us off, and we returned to Grichev.”²⁸

According to estimates, two-thirds of the 30,000 Jews of Zhitomir, which fell to the Germans on July 9, were evacuated.²⁹ Kamenets-Podolsky, which was captured on July 11, had a Jewish population of 14,000, of whom 4,000 to 5,000 were evacuated or managed to escape.³⁰ Berdichev, which was occupied on July 7, was an important Jewish center. One-third of its 24,000 Jews escaped or were evacuated.³¹ Vinnitsa, home to some 34,000 Jews, was taken on July 21, and some 17,000 Jews were able to escape in an organized evacuation.³² In Uman, which was captured on July 30, some 6,000 of the almost 14,000 strong Jewish community managed to escape.³³ In the smaller towns and townships, however, which had no central government institutions or large industrial plants, a much smaller number of Jews were evacuated. According to eyewitness testimony from the town Ilinitz, in the Vinnitsa province, the evacuation program was riddled with problems: “Thousands of Jews who escaped from west Ukraine passed through our town. . . . We, too, had planned to leave. . . . When inhabitants approached the chairman of the region’s executive committee asking for evacuation documents, without which it would be impossible to leave the area, he shouted, ‘Why are you causing a panic? The Germans aren’t going to come here.’ . . . But the Germans did come.”³⁴

Smolensk, on the main road to Moscow, was captured on July 16. This town had 15,000 Jews, of whom over 12,000 escaped or were evacuated.³⁵

The number of Jews in Zone A, which included most of east Belorussia, parts of the Ukraine, and parts of the Smolensk province, totaled around 763,000. According to estimates that between 304,000 and 308,000 people escaped, were evacuated, or were mobilized into the army, 445,000 to 459,000 remained under German occupation.

Evacuation from Zone B

Evacuation of the population from Zone B took place during August and September 1941, the same time as the German army was directing its main thrust

toward conquering the Ukraine, including its capital, Kiev. The Germans' advance toward Moscow had come to an almost complete halt east of Smolensk. From the central front, the German armored forces had turned south to complete the encirclement of central Ukraine. Many thousands of Jews who had not managed to escape in time were no longer able to make their way eastward. The following Ukrainian provinces fell under German occupation at this time: Kirovograd (on August 4); Nikolaev (August 17); Kherson (August 19); Dnepropetrovsk (August 25); Chernigov (September 9); Poltava (September 18); Kiev (September 19). In southeastern Belorussia, the Germans captured the provinces of Gomel (August 19) and Polesie (Mozyr was taken on August 22). Most of these regions had been part of the former Jewish Pale of Settlement, and many Jews lived there.

The total Jewish population of Zone B was 728,000, and these were joined by thousands more who had escaped from the more western regions. The organized evacuation of Kiev had begun during the first weeks of the war, in response to heavy air bombing. According to a report by the Communist Party's Municipal Council, "The Fascist air force increased its bombardment. . . . The operation of the industrial plants that produced [goods] for the front became difficult. . . . An order arrived to disband industrial plants and scientific research institutions and to transfer them to the eastern provinces of the Soviet Union. . . . One hundred and ninety-seven factories were disbanded and transferred in their entirety . . . [and] 335,000 inhabitants were evacuated from Kiev."³⁶

Evacuation and escape continued from Kiev until its capture, but not everyone who tried to escape succeeded. According to a Jewish eyewitness, Ida Pinkart:

On September 18, as the Hitlerites were at a distance of 10 kilometers from Kiev . . . I awoke at 4 a.m., took leave of my beloved mother and son, and hurried to the meeting point. . . . When I arrived at the meeting point, I didn't find anyone there. . . . I managed to get a ride in a car that was taking nurses from a medical unit. . . . On September 24 we found ourselves finally surrounded. . . . Bombing continued from the air. There were many dead and wounded. . . . We split up into small groups. . . . The nearest village was Zelenovka. . . . I met a girl who told me what had happened in the village. The Germans had executed the Jewish nurses [from the medical unit]. Before shooting them, they undressed the nurses and gave their clothes to the Russian nurses, who were then released to their homes. . . . I decided to return to Kiev.³⁷

Included in the evacuation from Kiev were government offices and academic and cultural institutions; the number of Jews employed in these was relatively high. According to estimates, 170,000 Jews—some 74 percent of the local Jewish population and about 50 percent of the overall population—were evacuated from Kiev. Between 60,000 and 70,000 Jews remained in Kiev.³⁸

The larger cities usually served as industrial centers and major traffic junctions and were the main targets for German air attacks. Evacuation from these cities began at a relatively early stage in the war. Since most of the Jews were city dwellers, a relatively high number managed to be included in the evacuation programs. Around two-thirds of Dnepropetrovsk's 90,000 Jews were evacuated,³⁹ as were two-thirds of Kherson's 16,500 Jews.⁴⁰

There was a large Jewish agricultural community in the areas under occupation, including the Jewish national regions of Kalinindorf, Nai-Zlatopol, and Stalindorf. About 8,500 Jewish families lived on kolkhozes in these areas,⁴¹ and some of the Jewish farmers were evacuated, along with their livestock, to the Saratov region near the Volga. Although the official evacuating authorities in these regions had more time at their disposal, the conditions under which they were forced to operate, which simultaneously involved military evacuation, air bombing, and lack of transportation, were harsh. The fact that most of the Jews did not know what awaited them under German occupation was also a factor in their reluctance to relocate. According to a Jewish woman from a kolkhoz:

In our village, Verkhovnaia, in the province of Vcheraish, there were twenty-five Jewish families. . . . In the news, we were told that the enemy was being stopped. For two to three weeks no newspapers reached us. And suddenly they said that Fastov had been taken. . . . We were told that we could be evacuated. The communists were obliged [to be evacuated], the Jews were given the choice to be evacuated if they wished. . . . We waited awhile longer, to see what would happen. . . . The Germans drew closer. . . . Many were sick of the familiar [communist] dictatorship and waited for the arrival of the Germans. Many thought that life under the Germans would be better for them. Many didn't believe that the Germans were killing all the Jews, that they were annihilating Jews for the mere fact of their being Jews.⁴²

Some of the kolkhoz people who left in horse-drawn wagons, taking their cattle with them, did not succeed in reaching their destination. On the way to Zaporozhe, a convoy of several hundred Jewish farmers from the Frei Leben kolkhoz in the Jewish national region of Stalindorf was apprehended by a German force near the village of Chumki. The people of the convoy were identified as Jews and shot.⁴³

Other convoys probably met a similar fate, yet the majority of Jews from this region—especially the cities—escaped or were evacuated, as recorded in the Einsatzgruppen report dated September 11, 1941, regarding the Ukraine: "It can be ascertained . . . that 70 percent to 90 percent . . . of the Jewish population bolted. . . . There is a considerable number of Jewish kolkhozes which consist of Jews not only as the managers but also as agricultural laborers."⁴⁴

The September 21, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report says that “there is a general impression that in these towns . . . a systematic evacuation has been planned and actually carried out . . . to a far greater extent than before. Particularly striking is the fact that in towns like Gomel and Chernigov, which formerly held quite a significant number of Jews (for example, in Gomel [where of] 100,000 inhabitants, 50 percent were Jews), hardly a single Jew can be found.”⁴⁵ German reports supplying statistics on the murder of Jews in nine places in the Ukraine (Dnepropetrovsk, Nikolaev, Kirovograd, Kherson, Balta, Priluki, Pavlograd, Ananyev, Poltava) captured in August and September 1941 show that an average of 65 percent of the Jews escaped or were evacuated.⁴⁶ In the provinces of Gomel and Polesie in eastern Belorussia, which were taken during the second half of August 1941, the percentage of Jews who escaped or were evacuated was higher — 75 percent — due to the fact that they had more time at their disposal.⁴⁷

German sources for the number of Jews remaining in the occupied territories are based on their estimates and on the number of Jews they murdered. A certain number of Jews managed to conceal their identity during those first months or to find some kind of hiding place; they were discovered and murdered later. Thus according to an Einsatzgruppen report:

Although we succeeded, particularly in smaller towns and villages, in bringing about a complete liquidation of the Jewish problem, nevertheless, again and again it has been observed in the larger cities that after such an action, all Jews have indeed been eradicated. But, when after a certain period of time a Kommando returns, the number of Jews still found in the city always surpasses considerably the number of executed Jews.⁴⁸

According to estimates, the number of Jews to escape or be evacuated from Zone B was between 353,000 and 390,000; some 80,000 were mobilized into the army. Between 258,000 and 295,000 — or 35–40 percent of the local Jewish population — remained under Nazi occupation.

Evacuation from Zone C

Zone C was conquered in October and November 1941 and was among the most easterly areas captured by the German army up to the end of 1941. During these months the German army continued its occupation of eastern Ukraine, renewed its attack on the central front, and reached the outskirts of Moscow. Evacuation during these months focused on those areas that were in danger of occupation, including Moscow.

Evacuation was organized in each of the following Ukrainian provinces: Zaphorozhe (captured on October 4), Sumy (October 10), the city of Odessa

(October 16), Stalino (now known as Donetsk, captured on October 21), and Kharkov (October 25). The following are the provinces of the Russian Federative Republic in which evacuation was carried out: Orel (captured on October 3), Kalinin (October 17), Kursk (November 4), and the Crimean peninsula (excluding Sevastopol). Simferopol was captured on November 1; Kerch fell on November 16.

Some 627,000 Jews resided in Zone C. Odessa had the largest Jewish community with a population of over 205,000. At least 10,000 additional Jews from Bessarabia and from the province of Odessa found refuge in Odessa. Odessa fell to the Germans on October 16, 1941, after a siege that began on August 5. Since the city was cut off overland, the evacuation was carried out by sea to Crimea. According to an eyewitness, Ya'akov Maniovich:

There had been no special decision on the evacuation of Jews. . . . About 45 percent of the [Jewish] inhabitants of Odessa managed to get away, including men mobilized into the Red Army. About 100,000 [people] stayed behind for various reasons: some feared the dangers and the hardships of evacuation, others were unable to leave behind sick and elderly relatives, still others were reluctant to leave behind family members who were among the fighters and defenders of the city.⁴⁹

In other sources, too, the reference is to 100,000 Jews who were evacuated from Odessa and some 105,000 to 110,000 who remained behind.⁵⁰ With the exception of Odessa and the Crimean peninsula, conditions for evacuation of Zone C were relatively comfortable. The organizers of the evacuation had two to three months from the outbreak of war in which to prepare and carry out plans while the Germans advanced. Most of the region's Jewish population had settled during the Soviet period, was concentrated mainly in the large cities, and was employed in various government enterprises and industrial plants; most of these were evacuated. Over 80 percent of Kharkov's Jewish population—between 108,000 and 110,000 out of 133,000—were evacuated.⁵¹

Evacuation on a smaller scale seems to have taken place in the other Ukrainian provinces captured during this period (Zaporozhe, Sumy, Stalino), covering some 70 percent of the local Jewish population, or a little over 94,000 people. More than 40,000 people remained behind.

There was, by now, much more information on anti-Jewish persecution, so it is logical to assume that the number of Jews wishing to leave the region would have increased.⁵² Still, not all the Jews were aware of what they could expect under German occupation, nor were they all able to escape. According to Avraham Greenberg, a man from Mariupol, on the banks of the Sea of Azov in southern

Ukraine, which was captured on October 8: “We were working in the factory. They removed the [more] important machines and began transferring them to Ural. . . . At the beginning of October, in the morning, the Germans burst into the town. We hadn’t imagined how close they were. . . . It was impossible to leave, because the Germans cut off the way to Taganrog.”⁵³ About 10,500 Jews lived in Mariupol, and between 8,000 and 9,000 of them remained.

Some 90,000 Jews lived in the Russian Federative Republic, which was captured as part of Zone C—Kalinin, Tula, Kursk, Orel, Rostov. Most of them were evacuated. The Einsatzgruppen report stated: “At the time of the report, the flight of Jews toward the east could be observed. Thus the towns of Orel, Medyn, and Maloyaroslavets were free of Jews when the [Einsatz]Kommando entered there.”⁵⁴ Notwithstanding this, not all the Jews succeeded in escaping these cities, and later reports do mention executions of Jews in Orel.⁵⁵ Rostov fell on November 21, but a week later the Red Army pushed the Germans out of the town and controlled it until the end of July 1942.

It may be estimated that between 68,000 and 73,000, or 76–81 percent of the Jews in these parts of Zone C, were evacuated. Between 17,000 and 22,000 Jews remained in the German-occupied territories of the Russian Republic, excluding Crimea, at the end of 1941.

Some 60,000 Jews lived in the Crimean peninsula; these were joined by several thousand Jewish evacuees from Odessa. Evacuation and escape were particularly difficult, since all escape routes had been cut off even before the fall of the peninsula, and the single remaining route was by sea. The Einsatzgruppen report dated December 12, 1941, states, “The total number of Jews is approximately 40,000. Of these, a quarter live in Simferopol.”⁵⁶ This number was probably close to accurate. It may be estimated that the number of Jewish evacuees or escapees—not including the refugees—was between 15,000 and 20,000. From the entire Zone C between 385,000 and 395,000 Jews were evacuated or escaped. Between 230,000 and 240,000 Jews remained under German occupation.

According to the census of January 1939, of the approximately 2.12 million Jews who lived in the pre-September 1939 Soviet areas that were captured by the Germans up to the end of 1941, between 1.122 and 1.173 million escaped, were evacuated, or were mobilized into the army. The number of remaining Jews in the German-occupied areas was between 943,000 and 994,000. The real number of Jews, however, was greater, since some of them had not registered themselves as Jews in the census of January 1939, but for the Germans they were Jews. No data is available on these Jews, although estimates have it that their number was in the tens of thousands.⁵⁷ Nor do these numbers include the offspring of mixed marriage, whom the Germans treated as Jews; although no accurate evaluation

exists of the number of these, they, too, can be estimated in the thousands. Thus the number of people remaining in the pre-September 1939 Soviet borders under German occupation whom the Germans defined racially as Jews was between 970,000 and 1.025 million. After the evacuation and mobilization into the army, the overwhelming majority of the remaining Jewish population in the German-occupied areas of the old Soviet territories consisted of women, children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled.

EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM DURING EVACUATION

Many Jews who were not included in the organized evacuation program sought ways of obtaining an evacuation permit, and many actually managed to escape of their own volition, although even this was condemned by some members of the Soviet hierarchy. A memo from the first secretary of the Communist Party in Belorussia, P. Ponomarenko, to Stalin, dated no later than July 12, 1941, stated:

The atmosphere among the Belorussians is exceptionally patriotic. . . . I must point out the tenacity and uncompromising attitude toward the enemy of the kolkhozniks, as opposed to certain members of the local officials, who think of nothing but saving their own lives. The reason for this is the existence of a large Jewish middle class in the cities. Hitler has instilled in them the fear of death, and instead of fighting, they run away.⁵⁸

The kolkhozniks thus so highly rated by Ponomarenko were not evacuated, nor did they escape. Many of them waited for the Germans to come and save them from the Soviet regime and from the hated kolkhozes. The German reports do indeed emphasize the “friendly attitude” shown to them by these local populations of the occupied territories.⁵⁹

In some places there were anti-Jewish outbursts—some of them violent—during the evacuation. Several documents describing Moscow during the war years make special mention of anti-Jewish outbursts among the chaos that reigned in the city as the Germans were approaching. According to an eyewitness, G. B. Reshetin:

We were informed on October 13, [1941,] that the plant was to be evacuated. We were told that we were being transferred to Tashkent. . . . When we arrived at the plant on the morning of October 14, we found the management staff missing. They had left already. . . . In Moscow the anxiety and unrest grew

stronger from hour to hour. . . . On October 16 the Entuziasti road filled with people escaping toward Gorki. All sorts of people were stopping cars, dragging their passengers out and beating them up, taking out their possessions. . . . There were calls [to] beat the Jews ["Bei Zhidov"]. And here comes the next car. On the boot, a skinny old man sits, and a pretty girl next to him. The old man is dragged off the car, and his face is beaten to a pulp. The girl tries to protect the old man, shouting that he isn't a Jew, that they are delivering documents. The mob attacks. I would never have believed such a story if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.⁶⁰

This report is verified in a top secret document from the commander of the NKVD, Moscow Region, on October 18:

On October 16–17, 1941, cases of anarchistic behavior were reported in a number of industrial plants in Moscow. . . . On October 16, a group of factory workers from plant number 219 attacked a car on the Entuziasti road, carrying evacuees from Moscow, and started pillaging their property. . . . On October 17, Nekrasov, a metal worker at a motorcycle factory, together with two others, convened a propaganda meeting near the factory's garage, which took on the form of a pogrom, and called on the workers to [kill] the Jews. All three were arrested.⁶¹

None of these was an isolated incident in those days of chaos and evacuation fever. The instigators and rioters were anti-Soviet and criminal elements who took advantage of the confused situation. The mere fact that, compared with the rest of the population, relatively large numbers of Jews tried to get themselves evacuated or to escape, fearing their fate under Nazi occupation, was enough to arouse anti-Semitic responses.

The lives of many Jews were saved thanks to the Soviet government's evacuation operation and the fact that there was somewhere to escape to. Even the arrest and expulsion of thousands of Jews from the annexed territories on the eve of the German invasion—which, at the time, they saw as a tragedy—proved in retrospect to have been the salvation of many of those who were removed from the clutches of the Nazis. On June 22, 1941, the total number of Soviet Jews living in the territories captured by the Germans, including those territories annexed in 1939 and 1940, was estimated at between 4.28 and 4.32 million. Of this number, an estimated total between 2.645 and 2.695 million remained in the territories occupied by the Germans.

8

Anti-Jewish Pogroms during the Early Days of Occupation

LOCAL INITIATIVE AND GERMAN ENCOURAGEMENT

Following the German invasion and the hasty withdrawal of the Soviet administration and military, a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms swept over the annexed territories of west Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia, and north Bukovina. Thousands of Jewish men, women, and children were cruelly murdered in these pogroms.¹

Although the pogroms were generally initiated by local anti-Semitic elements, they were encouraged in several towns by advance units of the *Einsatzgruppen*. On June 29, 1941, Heydrich issued a directive regarding the activity of local anti-Soviet circles, in which he ordered that no obstacles be placed in the way of self-cleansing measures (*Selbstreinigungsbestrebungen*) carried out by anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic elements in the occupied territories. On the contrary, their intensity must be increased whenever possible.² But the local anti-Semites did not require encouragement from the Germans; all they needed were the right conditions and free rein to express their hatred for the Jews. The collapse of the Soviet regime and the arrival of the Germans provided all the necessary conditions. Rioting began in many towns and townships in Lithuania and west Ukraine, between the retreat of the Soviet forces and the entrance of German units.³ A combination of several factors, some old and some current events, resulted in this wave of pogroms.

Lithuanian and Ukrainian nationalists who had found refuge in Germany, with the help of various branches of the German administration, incited local nationalist groups, as well as the anti-Soviet underground, into anti-Jewish outbreaks in west Ukraine and Lithuania—the focal points of the pogroms. In Bessarabia and Bukovina, pogroms were carried out by Romanians, civilians, and military personnel as well as by local Ukrainians.

RIOTS AND POGROMS IN WESTERN UKRAINE

In 1929, Ukrainian nationalists exiled from the Soviet Union and from Poland after World War I established in Prague the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), with the aim of creating an independent Ukraine. As an anti-Soviet and anti-Poland organization, the OUN achieved the support of Nazi Germany and moved its headquarters to Berlin. Under the influence of Nazi ideology and traditional Ukrainian anti-Jewish stance, the OUN adopted the Nazi version of anti-Semitism. In Poland the OUN kept its activity underground, but the September 1939 German invasion made it possible for the organization to work openly. A split took place in the OUN at its general meeting in Krakov in 1940, in which the majority, under the leadership of Stephan Bandera, came out in favor of more independent activism and preparing an uprising to coincide with the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The minority, headed by Andre Melnik, wanted to maintain the movement's existing strengths by cooperating with Germany. Germany exploited both sides of the OUN for its own needs. Both sides hated the Jews. At the conference convened by the Bandera group in Krakov in April 1941, several statements were approved, including "The Jews of the Soviet Union are the most loyal supporters of the Bolshevik regime and the vanguard of Muscovite imperialism in the Ukraine. . . . The OUN sees in the Jews an element that supports the Bolshevik Muscovite regime."⁴ And in Lvov on July 1941, during a debate on attitudes toward national minorities in the Ukraine, one member of the Bandera leadership, Stephan Lenkavski, said, "As for the Jews, we shall use all necessary means to bring about their annihilation."⁵

In cooperation with the two OUN groups, German Army Intelligence organized two Ukrainian battalions, "Nightingale" and "Roland." Simultaneously with Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian underground attacked the withdrawing Soviet army and was also the motivating force behind the anti-Jewish pogroms. The "Nightingale" battalion was attached to the German forces that entered Lvov on June 30. The battalion also took part in anti-Jewish riots. With the Germans' entry into Lvov, Bandera's men established a Ukrainian national government under the leadership of Yaroslav Stečko. However, since Germany's plans for the Ukraine contradicted the national ambitions of the Ukrainians, their new government was dissolved a week after being established.⁶

Although anti-Semitism, inherent in large segments of the population of west Ukraine, had grown in strength under the hated Soviet regime, there was another excuse for widespread anti-Jewish incitement. During the hasty retreat of the first days of the war, the Soviet authorities had no means at their disposal to evacuate thousands of prisoners—most of them Ukrainians, some of them

Poles and some Jews—and were probably not interested in doing so. Instead of being freed, these prisoners, most of whom were political, were executed by the NKVD. Although the Jews had nothing to do with the executions, they were blamed by the Germans and the Ukrainian nationalists. Western Ukraine, especially its capital, Lvov, was swept by pogroms. According to Tadeusz Zaderecki, a Polish writer who lived at that time in Lvov:

A rabble of drunken farmers flowed in from the countryside to Lvov. . . . Something was about to happen and it was planned. . . . The prisons that the Soviets left behind opened and dozens, hundreds of mutilated bodies of political prisoners were revealed. . . . Who carried out the murders? The Jews! The fact that the murdered prisoners included Jews made no difference to anyone. . . . In front of the military prison, Zamarstinov, hundreds of Jews were removed from the nearby houses, men, women, old people, youngsters, boys and girls, children, all naked, after their clothes and underwear had been plucked from them, bleeding, followed by blows and kicks into the prison courtyard. . . . The people were ordered to dig their own pits and trenches, into which they fell, after being shot to death. . . . Some three hundred people were killed on that day, and several thousands more were injured, beaten, crippled. . . . Thus is the face of the first day of German rule in Lvov.⁷

The pogrom in Lvov began on June 30 and continued until July 3, and 4,000 Jews were murdered during those four days.⁸ Similar riots took place in dozens of towns and villages in Volhynia and east Galicia during the first few days after Germany's invasion.⁹ Pogroms took place in small townships and villages, in which most of the Jews were butchered, sometimes the entire Jewish community.¹⁰ According to the July 16, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report on the pogroms in east Galicia:

The prisons of Lvov were crammed with the bodies of murdered Ukrainians. According to a moderate estimate, in Lvov alone 3,000–4,000 persons were either killed or deported. . . . The number of those murdered in the Dobromil area is estimated to be approximately several hundred. . . . In Sambor on June 26, 1941, about 400 Ukrainians were shot by the Bolsheviks. . . . In the first hours after the Bolshevik withdrawal, the Ukrainian population displayed commendable activity against the Jews. For example, the Dobromil synagogue was set on fire and 50 Jews were killed by the enraged crowd at Sambor. Maltreating them, the Lvov inhabitants rounded up about 1,000 Jews and took them to the GPU prison. . . . The Russians, prior to their withdrawal, arrested and murdered indiscriminately a total of 700 Ukrainians. . . . The

militia retaliated by arresting and shooting several hundred Jews. The number of Jews liquidated may run to about 300–500.¹¹

This report does not express the entire scope of the riots and the overall number of victims. Local thugs carried out their murderous activity in many places, even before the arrival of the German army. There is no available information on the rural areas, including villages with tiny Jewish communities, where most or all were murdered. In Lvov one more pogrom took place three weeks after the Germans entered the city, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the murder of Semion Petlyura.¹² According to Zaderecki:

On the morning of July 25 thousands of drunken farmers started streaming into Lvov. . . . Only a few Jews were on the streets at the time on their way to work. They were the first to get the blows. . . . The rioters took out everyone they could find inside the houses, beating them and at the same time, they destroyed and pillaged everything they could lay their hands on. . . . At nearly five o'clock the mob became tired of the bloody game and started to disperse. That is when the activity passed into the hands of the police alone. . . . Three days "Action Petlyura" went on. . . . The events took place beginning July 25 until 28. One thousand five hundred people were killed, not counting the sick and the hostages.¹³

The Stanislaw (now Ivano-Frankovsk) province was part of the region under the control of the Hungarian army, and attempts on the part of the Ukrainians to carry out pogroms in Kolomyia, Kosov, Obertin, and Bolekhov were stopped by the Hungarians.¹⁴ The Hungarians' behavior did not stem from sympathy for the Jews; relations between Hungary and the Ukrainians had been tense since March 1939, when Transcarpathian Ukraine, with its mainly Ukrainian population, was annexed to Hungary.¹⁵ The Hungarian command may have feared the Ukrainians' attacks on the Jews turning into attacks on the Hungarians and decided to put a stop to them in time. Moreover, at that time Hungary had begun to expel non-Hungarian Jews to areas in east Galicia that were under the control of the Hungarian army. It was easier to carry out this plan under conditions of relative calm.¹⁶

POGROMS IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

Lithuanian nationalists who escaped to Germany when the Soviet Union annexed their country established the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) on November 17, 1940, with the support of the German government and under the leadership of Colonel Skirpa, Lithuania's ambassador to Germany. Simultaneously,

underground cells belonging to the LAF were established in Lithuania; these conducted anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic propaganda. According to an announcement prepared in Germany on behalf of the LAF on March 19, 1941, and sent to Lithuanian underground:

The hour of Lithuania's liberation is close at hand. Immediately the campaign from the west starts. . . . Local uprising must be started. . . . Local communists and other traitors of Lithuania must be arrested at once (The traitor will be pardoned only provided he proves beyond doubt that he has killed one Jew at least). . . . Already today inform the Jews that their fate has been decided upon. So that those who can had better get out of Lithuania now.¹⁷

And according to another pamphlet, probably distributed on the day of the German invasion of the Soviet Union:

The crucial day of reckoning has come for the Jews at last. Lithuania must be liberated not only from the Asiatic Bolshevik slavery, but also from the Jewish yoke of long standing. . . . In the new Lithuanian state . . . not a single Jew shall have any citizenship rights.¹⁸

While the German army was invading the Soviet Union, an anti-Soviet rebellion broke out in Lithuania. The rebels, the so-called partisans, civilians, and soldiers of the No. 29 Lithuanian Corps, which was part of the Red Army, attacked the retreating Red Army soldiers and Jews fleeing from Lithuania. These partisans were the active factor in the pogroms. In Kaunas, a "Provisional Lithuanian Government" was established on June 23, under the leadership of Juozas Ambrazevicius, with the objective of establishing an independent Lithuanian state, allied to Germany. Until August 5, 1941, the Provisional Lithuanian Government ran the country—parallel to the German military administration—before being dissolved by the German authorities.¹⁹

Anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish propaganda made Lithuania a lodestone for pogroms. In at least forty localities throughout Lithuania, Lithuanians set out on a murderous rampage against Jews. Some 10,000 Jews were murdered during the first weeks after the outbreak of war.²⁰ The largest pogrom was carried out in Kaunas, and according to an eyewitness:

On the night of June 26, Lithuanian partisans and simple Lithuanian folk who joined them slaughtered some 800 Jews in Slobodka (Willampol), a suburb of Kaunas. In their bloodthirsty activity, the rioters did not distinguish between men and women, old people and children. Their cruelty knew no bounds. . . . A house where a number of Jews found refuge was set alight and the partisans did not allow the firemen to put out the fire. The Jews were burned alive in

the flames. People were drowned in the river Villia [Neris], and others were murdered on the riverbank. . . . On the afternoon of the 27th, about sixty Jews were cruelly murdered in the courtyard of the garage belonging to the company Lietukis, while a large crowd of inquisitive Lithuanians looked on.²¹

In Latvia, too, pogroms were carried out against the Jews. According to an eyewitness in Riga:

Latvians entered Jewish homes and took everything they could lay their hands on. . . . In Kormanova Street I saw Latvians torturing old men and cutting off their beards, to the sound of laughter, joy, and happiness. . . . We started seeing the first deaths, not those that disappeared, but those that were shot in the street, hung on electricity poles, or just murdered by stones or metal bars. . . . While the Germans and the Latvians were burning down the big synagogue on Gogol Street, it was full of Jewish refugees from the surrounding towns. No one survived. Whoever wasn't shot burned to death.²²

The summary report of Einsatzgruppe A, dated October 15, 1941, describes the pogroms thus:

Based on the consideration that the population of the Baltic countries had suffered most severely under the rule of Bolshevism and Jewry, while they were incorporated into the Soviet Union, it was to be expected that after liberation from this foreign rule, they would themselves to a large extent eliminate those of the enemy left behind after the retreat of the Red Army. It was the task of the Sipo to set these self-cleansing movements going and to direct them into the right channels. . . . It was no less important to establish as unshakable and provable facts for the future that it was the liberated population itself which took the most severe measures on its own initiative against the Bolshevik and Jewish enemy, without any German instruction being evident. In Lithuania this was achieved for the first time by activating the partisans in Kaunas. . . . In the course of the first pogrom, during the night of June 25–26, the Lithuanian partisans eliminated more than 1,500 Jews, set fire to several synagogues or destroyed them by other means, and burned down an area consisting of about 60 houses inhabited by Jews. During the nights that followed, 2,300 Jews were eliminated in the same way. In other parts of Lithuania, similar *Aktionen* followed the example set in Kaunas, but on a smaller scale. . . . It proved considerably more difficult to set in motion similar cleansing *Aktionen* and pogroms in Latvia. The main reason was that the entire national leadership, especially in Riga, had been killed or deported by the Soviets. Even in Riga, it proved possible by means of appropriate sug-

gestions to the Latvian auxiliary police to get an anti-Jewish pogrom going, in the course of which all the synagogues were destroyed and about 400 Jews killed. . . . In Estonia, there was no opportunity of instigating pogroms owing to the relatively small number of Jews.²³

Notwithstanding this report, in Latvia the local population also initiated pogroms in which Jews were murdered and their property was stolen. In his report, the Gebietskommissar of Mitau province (Yelgava) pointed out that he was told at a meeting with 150 heads of local (Latvian) municipalities that the local population in their regions had “liquidated the Jews in a spontaneous outburst of hatred.”²⁴

POGROMS IN BESSARABIA AND NORTH BUKOVINA

The wave of pogroms also washed over areas in Bessarabia and north Bukovina:

In the period between the departure of the Soviet army and the entry of the Romanian or German troops, part of the native population profited from this situation and created bands of terrorists, having as their primary aim the extermination of the Jews. It is almost impossible to describe all the killings, looting, rapes, etc., initiated and perpetrated by these gangs. . . . At Sadigora (Sadgora), another small Bukovinian town, Vladimir Russo proclaimed himself commander of the local police, formed on his initiative. Between July 5 and 6, Russo and his gang robbed and killed more than 100 Jews in Rohozna, Jucica-Noua, and Sadigora. . . . The remaining Jews in the three villages . . . were shot. . . . The young girls were raped and then murdered. The cruelty of Russo (who was a teacher) and his cohorts serves as a single example of the typical course of events in many small towns and villages during the interregnum period. . . . It is impossible to compile accurate statistics on Jewish lives lost at this time, but it can be stated that the toll was in the tens of thousands.²⁵

BELORUSSIA AND THE OLD SOVIET TERRITORIES

During the first days of the war, attacks on Jews by local inhabitants did take place in western Belorussia and the old territories of the Soviet Union, but there were no full-scale pogroms. The main reason for this was that local nationalist and anti-Semitic circles were weaker than in the Baltic states and in the Ukraine. An Einsatzgruppen report regarding the population of Byelorussia stated:

There is practically no Belorussian national consciousness left in that area. Pronounced anti-Semitism is also missing. . . . In general, the population harbors a feeling of hatred and rage toward the Jews and approves of the German measures (establishing ghettos, labor units, security police procedure, etc.) but is not able by itself to take the initiative in regard to the treatment of the Jews.²⁶

Sources at our disposal supply no information regarding pogroms in the old territories of the Soviet Union, similar to those in other regions described here. This does not mean that there was any special sympathy toward the Jews in these regions, but, rather, a measure of patriotism made people see Germany as an enemy that attacked their homeland; also, many families had sons and husbands in the Red Army fighting the Germans. In some places calls were heard in favor of pogroms, as Sara Gleich, a young woman from Mariupol, wrote in her diary on October 11, 1941: "The arrival of the Germans has torn away the masks [from the faces of the Jew-haters]. Handwritten announcements are posted around the town, calling for pogroms. The Black Hundreds have come back to life."²⁷ But the inhabitants of Mariupol did not respond to this call.

The pogroms in the Soviet Union served Germany's propaganda to prove the local public's hatred for the Jews. German authorities perpetuated these pogroms in movies and photographs. Once the German propaganda machine had achieved its objectives, the pogroms came to a stop. The Einsatzgruppen and other SS units arrived in the occupied areas and set in motion the systematic and planned annihilation of the Jews.

The German Administration in the Occupied Territories and Its Anti-Jewish Policy

MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

The German army established a military administration in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union that included the *Ortskommandanturen* and the *Feldkommandanturen*.

OKH Department 7, which was responsible for the military administration, distributed a document through the various ranks that summarized partial directives published before the invasion:

All male and female Jews aged 10 years or above in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union must wear a 10 cm yellow star on their left chest and on their back. . . . In every settlement in which more than 50 Jews reside, a Jewish council will be established. In settlements where the Jewish population numbers less than 10,000, the Jewish council will have twelve members. Where the Jewish population is larger than 10,000, the number of Jewish council members will be twenty-four. . . . The local Jewish population will elect its Jewish council, and the Jewish council will elect its chairman and deputy chairman. . . . The *Ortskommandant*, together with the *Sipo*, will decide whether or not to accept the composition of the Jewish council. The Jewish council is obliged to carry out orders issued by the army and the police, via the council's chairman and deputy chairman. . . . The chairman, his deputy, and all the other members of the council will be held personally responsible for any activity on the part of the Jewish community directed against the German army, against the German police, and against their orders. The *Feldkommandant* and the *Ortskommandant* will take the strictest measures, including death sentences, not only against the perpetrators of such acts but also against members of the Jewish council.

The Jews will be concentrated within closed areas in the settlements in which they live. . . . Ghettos will be established in places with large Jewish communities—and this is essential and practical, considering the conditions and existing means and the fact that this will not harm more urgent tasks. . . . The Jewish councils will operate a Jewish police. . . .

All Jewish inhabitants of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, males aged between 14 and 60, females aged between 16 and 50, will be subject immediately to forced hard labor. . . . Registration for forced labor will be carried out in the office of the mayor. . . . Calls for registration will be done through the Jewish council. . . . In order for the Jews to be efficiently supervised, they must be forbidden to be outside their areas of residence. . . . Jews are forbidden to trade with the Arian population. . . . All deviations will be punished most severely.¹

Apart from these anti-Jewish directives, it was also recommended that Jews be forced to bury the bodies of Soviet soldiers and dead animals.²

These anti-Jewish directives were similar to those in the regions of the General Government in Poland. But in the occupied Soviet territories, in contrast to the General Government, all directives concerning the Jewish population were under the control of the German army and were carried out by the German military administration. These directives assisted the Einsatzgruppen and other police and ss units to murder Jews, since these were already singled out by the yellow star on their clothing and the fact that they had to be incarcerated in ghettos. But this was just the beginning of the German army's involvement in anti-Jewish policies and did not yet include active participation in the act of annihilation but created the conditions for them. The longer and harsher the war, the greater this involvement. German historian Jürgen Förster wrote, "The difference between Operation Barbarossa and the campaign against Poland was that in the Vernichtungskrieg against 'Jewish Bolshevism,' the line between military and ideological warfare was erased before the first shot was fired. . . . The deliberate mixing together of ideological goals with military needs . . . paved the way for the army's joining the ss in striking a fatal blow against the phantom of Jewish Bolshevism."³

Orders issued by OKH served as a basis for subsequent orders issued by local departments of the military government. Directives relating to the yellow star, the Jewish council, forced labor, and, in many places, the Jewish census were all to be carried out immediately, while the matter of the timetable for establishing ghettos was assigned to the local military governors.

CONSOLIDATING GERMAN POLICY
REGARDING OCCUPIED SOVIET TERRITORIES

A result of its swift advance eastward toward Moscow and Leningrad was that the German army soon had control of huge areas and millions of people. Wishing to avoid having to deal with political issues in the Baltic states and the Ukraine, who were striving for a measure of independence, the army was keen to hand over the rear areas to civil administration under Alfred Rosenberg. Since decisions were required regarding the political future of the territories and the nations inhabiting them, a meeting was convened on July 16, 1941, in Hitler's HQ to decide these issues. The meeting was attended by Hitler, Hermann Göring, Rosenberg, Wilhelm Keitel, Hans Lammers, and Martin Bormann and summed up by Hitler:

It is important at this time not to reveal our objectives to the rest of the world. . . . All the essentials—executions, transfer of populations, etc.—we are carrying them out and can continue to do so. . . . It must be completely clear to us that we shall never withdraw from these regions. . . . Crimea must be cleansed of all the foreigners and settled with Germans. Just so Austrian Galicia, too, must become a part of the Reich. . . . The Russians have just issued an order for partisan warfare in our hinterland. This partisan war even has an advantage: it allows us . . . to liquidate anyone who rises against us. And the main thing, the establishment of a military superpower west of the Ural Mountains, must never be a part of the agenda, even if we have to fight 100 years toward this objective. . . . There must be an ironbound principle: no one [from the west of Ural] must ever be allowed to bear arms except the Germans. . . . The Baltic states, up to the River Dvina, when determined by Fieldmarshall Keitel, will be taken over by the [civil] administration. . . . The Führer has decided to transfer Austrian Galicia to the command of Reichsminister Hans Frank [general governor of Poland]. . . . The Führer stresses that all the Baltic states must be included in the Reich. . . . The Führer went on to point out that the [German] settlements along the Volga should be part of the Reich, as should the [oil-rich] Baku region. . . . The Führer wants to erase Leningrad from the face of the earth and then to hand it over to Finland. . . . The Führer stresses . . . that the area is huge and that order must be imposed on it as soon as possible. The best way to achieve this is to put to death anyone who so much as looks at us askance. Fieldmarshall Keitel stresses that the local population . . . will bear responsibility for any crimes committed.⁴

Rosenberg's proposal to appoint heads of civil government included candidates for the Moscow and Caucasus regions as well as for more outlying regions. Hitler

approved the appointment of Heinrich Lohse as Reichskommissar for Ostland and Erich Koch as Reichskommissar for the Ukraine. Alongside this appointment, Koch continued to serve as Gauleiter (district chief and Nazi Party head in his district) of east Prussia and was granted control of the Bialystok region. The area under his control spread from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.⁵ Until his new appointment, Lohse had served as Gauleiter of the German province of Schleswig-Holstein.

In the July 16 meeting, Hitler determined that Germany's policies in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union would be based on strength, terror, and maximum exploitation of the region. Hitler rejected the idea of promising the region's nations any kind of national autonomy or independence in return for their cooperation with Germany in its war against the Soviet Union. At that time, the German army was making swift headway on all fronts, and Hitler and the Nazi leadership were quite sure that victory was certain, and they had no need for the support of these nations. He spoke about Crimea, which was still under Soviet rule, and of Baku on the Caspian Sea and about the Volga region, many hundred kilometers away from the most advanced German forces.

The situation at the battlefield was good. The western part of Smolensk had been captured, and Moscow was only 200 miles ahead. The collapse of the Soviet regime and Germany's resounding victory appeared imminent to Hitler and the Nazi leadership.⁶ The main issue on July 16, 1941, related principally to the administrative division of the already occupied Soviet territories and those that would be occupied in the near future—an area stretching as far as the Ural Mountains—and how to deal with the national aspirations of the local population. It was, in a sense, a meeting of victors, in which the participants were already dividing the spoils of war. The Jewish issue is not mentioned in the minutes, and it appears to have been absent from the debate, but Hitler's remarks, such as "Stalin's call for a partisan war . . . gives us the opportunity to exterminate anyone who stands in our way" and "The best way to achieve this is to put to death anyone who so much as looks at us askance," certainly influenced the fate of the Jews, who had been defined in advance as enemies standing in Germany's way to victory.

Two directives signed by Hitler, Keitel, and Lammers were published on July 17, 1941, relating to the decisions made at the previous day's meeting. One dealt with the establishment of civil administration and the appointment of Rosenberg as minister for the eastern occupied territories. The other directive dealt with police security in the occupied Soviet territories, which would be placed under the jurisdiction of Heinrich Himmler. Himmler would have the authority to issue directives directly to the Reichskommissars and not via Rosenberg's Berlin

offices on all matters of police security. On general and political issues, Himmler's instructions would be passed down via Rosenberg. Higher SS and Police Leaders were appointed in each of the Reichskommissariats, and an SS and Police Leader (SSPF) was appointed in each of the Generalkommissariats.⁷

Himmler did not attend the meeting in Hitler's HQ, but was informed about the decisions made there. The jurisdiction given to him a day after the meeting, on all matters of police security matters across the occupied Soviet territories, included the fate of the Jews in these territories. This new appointment widened his authority. In Directive no. 21 (Operation Barbarossa) he was authorized to act independently "within the area of army operations" Now he was authorized to issue directives straight to the Reichskommissars and carry out his policy in all the occupied territories of Soviet Union, including the areas of civil administration.

The sense of an imminent end to the war and approaching victory clearly affected the decision to exterminate the Jews. Hitler and Himmler seemed to assume that actions that could be carried out during wartime were harder to carry out in peacetime. They decided, therefore, to annihilate the Soviet Jews while the territories were still shrouded in the fog of battle—which might end before the arrival of winter. The atmosphere of imminent victory was also expressed in two orders issued during the second half of July 1941: to murder Jewish prisoners of war and to release prisoners of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian nationality, the Volksdeutsche, and the Belorussians. This order did not relate to officers.⁸

CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

On July 18, Göring issued a directive according to which, and based on Hitler's decisions, the Bialystok district would come under the authority of Gauleiter Koch and east Galicia would come under the authority of the general governor of Poland, Hans Frank.⁹ East Galicia was annexed to the General Government on August 1, 1941. The separation of east Galicia from the rest of the Ukraine and its political-administrative framework—Reichskommissariat Ukraine—aroused dissent among Ukrainian nationalist circles and dashed their hopes for some form of independence. The Bialystok region became a separate administrative unit on August 15, 1941—Bezirk Bialystok—and came under the jurisdiction of Koch.¹⁰

On August 20, 1941, a directive from Hitler was published regarding the transfer to civil government of territories in Reichskommissariats Ostland and the Ukraine. The official date for receiving responsibility for the territories was

September 1, 1941, on which day the territories of Lithuania, Latvia, and west Belorussia, including the city of Minsk and its surroundings but excluding Brest-Litovsk and south Polesie, were placed under the authority of Reichskommissariat Ostland.¹¹ East Belorussia — territories east of River Berezina — which included the provinces of Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Gomel, remained under military administration. Based on the nationalities of the population (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Belorussia), Ostland was split into four Generalkommissariats. The Latvian city of Riga was defined as the capital of Ostland and the place in which Lohse set up his headquarters.

The regions of south Polesie, including the city of Brest-Litovsk, and Volhynia, Podolia, and Kamenets-Podolski came under the authority of Reichskommissariat Ukraine on September 1, 1941. On October 20, 1941, the regions of Vinitsa, Zhitomir, Kiev, and Cherkassy were placed under civil administration. The more eastern provinces of Nikolaev, Kherson, Dnepropetrovsk, and Zaporozhe were placed under the authority of Reichskommissariat Ukraine on November 15, 1941. Reichskommissariat Ukraine was a single ethnic unit, divided administratively (rather than nationally) into five Generalkommissariats or, as they were known, Generalbezirk: Volhynia, Nikolaev, Zhitomir, Kiev, and Dnepropetrovsk. The Kherson and Melitopol provinces were placed under the control of Reichskommissariat Ukraine only on September 1, 1942, and given the name Generalbezirk Tauria.¹² Due to military developments and German defeats in the winter of 1941–42, Reichskommissariats Ostland was not extended further east to the boundaries planned by Rosenberg. For the same reasons, Reichskommissariats Moscow and Caucasus did not materialize at all.

In accordance with the agreement signed between Germany and Romania on August 30, 1941, the region between the rivers Dnestr and Bug, including the cities of Odessa and Mogilev-Podolsky, was placed under Romanian rule. This region, which was part of the Ukraine, was handed over to Romania in return for the latter's participation in the war against the Soviet Union and in reparation for the fact that Romania, under German pressure, had to give north Transylvania to Hungary on August 30, 1940. It was another blow to the Ukraine's national aspirations and followed the dispersion of their government in Lvov and the annexation of east Galicia to the General Government.

Lohse arrived in Kaunas at the end of July and took up responsibility for Lithuania and southern Latvia, in accordance with an agreement signed on July 14 by Keitel and Rosenberg, more than a month before the date published in the above mentioned directive of Hitler.¹³ Those parts of Belorussia that were attached to Ostland came under civil administration on September 1, 1941. Generalkommissars were appointed: Lithuania, Adrian von Renteln, Latvia,

Otto Drechsler, Estonia, Karl Litzmann, and Belorussia, Wilhelm Kube. ss Obergruppenführer Hans Prutzmann was appointed Higher ss and Police Leader in Ostland and served in this position until late October or early November 1941, when he was replaced by Obergruppenführer Friedrich Jeckeln.

On July 27, 1941, Lohse called a meeting at Kaunas of the Generalkommissars and Gebietskommissars of Ostland. At this meeting he stressed the supreme importance of exploiting local agriculture, since this had to supply food for Army Group North and the German forces based in Ostland.¹⁴ The following day, July 28, von Renteln announced that he had taken over the government of Lithuania on behalf of the Reich. Lithuanian “partisan” units—whom the Lithuanians wanted to see as the nucleus of their national army—were disbanded. Some were reorganized as police units under German command. On August 5, von Renteln dissolved the provisional Lithuanian government and established instead a “general council” whose members served as advisors to the German civil administration. General Petrus Kubiliunas of the Lithuanian fascist Iron Wolf organization was appointed head of the advisory council.¹⁵

Before being dispersed on August 1, the provisional Lithuanian government managed to pass a “Jewish Constitution,” which required the arrest of all Jews who were former communist activists. The remaining Jews were to be settled in special places that they would be forbidden to leave without police permission. In order to be easily identifiable, all Jews had to wear yellow stars on their clothing. They also had to dispose of their property within two weeks, or else it would be confiscated. Special exemption from these rulings was given to Jews who had volunteered to serve in the Lithuanian army during its war of independence before 1919 and were awarded the Cross of Vytis.¹⁶ The provisional Lithuanian government totally ignored the fact that in June and July, while it was still in power, thousands of Jews were murdered in pogroms perpetrated by Lithuanian civilians or “partisans” and that nothing was done to stop these pogroms.¹⁷

With the retreat of the Soviet army, the Latvian nationalist groups established a form of government which they coined the Latvian Organization Center, but this was dispersed in mid-July by Einsatzgruppe A Commander Walter Stahlecker. In Latvia, too, a general council was appointed when civil administration was established and headed by Oskars Dankers, former chief of staff of the Latvian army.¹⁸ Hjalmar Mae, head of the extreme nationalist movement Vaps, was appointed to head the general council in Estonia.

The heads of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia’s general councils had found refuge in Germany prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union, and they returned to their countries with the occupying German forces. Although the general councils had no real authority, the fact of their existence gave the Baltic nations some kind

of preferential status vis-à-vis the other occupied territories, and they cooperated loyally with the German administration.

On October 22, 1941, Generalkommissar of Belorussia Wilhelm Kube established a Belorussian council named “Belorussian Self-Help” (Samapomoch) headed by Dr. Ivan Ermachenko. This council had no real authority, and it was established by the Germans in order to delude the local population into believing that they would be granted some national independence in the future. The council did not gain the support of the Belorussian population.¹⁹

In Generalkommissariat Volhynia-Podolia, which was a part of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the civil administration established a “Ukrainian Trustee Council.” This council appears to have convened once only, in late August or early September 1941, and thus ended its function. Its mere existence contradicted the policies of Reichskommissar Koch, who opposed granting the Ukrainians any form of sovereignty. In Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the municipality served as the highest level of Ukrainian institution.

Germany had difficulty finding qualified administrators for the vast occupied areas of the Soviet Union. Martin Dean related to the quality of the people who staffed the German civilian administration there: “They were generally men of poor quality, as many Reich offices saw recruitment to the east as a welcome opportunity to rid themselves of personal enemies, obnoxious meddlers, and incompetent chair-warmers.”²⁰

INDIGENOUS ADMINISTRATION

One of the first steps taken by the military administration was the establishment of a local indigenous administration. Orders issued by the OKH quartermaster regarding the structure of military government in the occupied territories required that local administrations be composed of inhabitants who were reliable and loyal to the Germans. The largest administrative unit to which a local inhabitant could be appointed was a district (Rayon), under which was a group of towns and townships, each headed by a mayor (Bürgermeister). In each rural region under his authority, the mayor was responsible for appointing a local village elder. This local administration oversaw daily life, in accordance with orders from the German military administration.²¹

The Germans urgently needed the indigenous administration. Neither the military nor the civilian German administration had the requested manpower to control and exploit the newly occupied territories, even on the level of Rayon and city. They did not even have basic information about the infrastructure. Therefore, during the first days of German occupation of any locality or region,

they appointed people in charge of local administration. The German military administration, which came into being before the civilian administration, had no difficulty in finding the people needed for the indigenous administration. Usually these people came on their own initiative to the German local command post, or they were advised by locals whom to appoint. The very fact that they were not evacuated or left on their own before the German occupation signaled that they were not ardent communists or supporters of the Soviet regime. From time to time, when the Germans were not satisfied with the performance of their appointees, they replaced them. Usually those appointed by the military administration locals continued to serve under the German civilian administration.

Wendy Lower, who focused her research on the Zhitomir district in Ukraine in relation to the typical characteristics of the people of the indigenous administration, wrote: “Nearly all of them had a middle school education and were among the local professional class of teachers, doctors, priests, and bookkeepers. They were mostly over 40 years of age, so they had grown up in the tumultuous years of World War I and the Bolshevik revolution.”²² Usually this kind of people filled the ranks of the indigenous administration in other regions of the occupied territories. In the areas annexed by the Soviets in 1939–40, many of the people who were appointed to serve in the indigenous administration, especially in the Baltic states and in Bessarabia and North Bukovina, were people who kept similar jobs before Soviet occupation and had survived the short period of communist rule there without being arrested and deported.

The mayor and village elders were required, among other things, to conduct a census of the local population, which was updated periodically; to report on people residing in the area under their control and suspected of hostile attitudes toward Germany; and to report to the military administration on anyone who had not lived there before June 22, 1941, the day of the German attack on the USSR. The mayor was responsible for appointing someone in each house under his jurisdiction to make sure that no people were living in the house who were not permanent inhabitants.²³ These tasks also touched on the Jewish issue: the population census included a nationality clause, which immediately exposed the Jews. The duty to report on anyone who had not lived in the area prior to the war was especially relevant to those thousands of Jewish refugees who were trying to escape eastwards into the Soviet Union. The clause was also related to Jews who, having escaped annihilation, had tried to find safety among the local population in the towns and villages. The people who were charged with reporting on any Jews residing in their homes were an extremely useful tool for uncovering Jews who had not moved to ghettos or did not follow the deportation orders.

Browning writes about the role of the indigenous administration in the perse-

cution of the Jews: “Without the active support of mayors, city councils, housing offices, and a plethora of local administrators, the identification, expropriation, and ghettoization of the Jewish population especially in rural areas would have exceeded the limited logistic capabilities of German occupation agencies. In some cases, these local offices did more than provide preparatory help for the murder of the Jews.”²⁴ Browning diminishes the role of the indigenous administration in the murder of the Jews; it was not limited to “some cases” and not “especially in rural areas.” The identification of the Jews was crucial in the extermination process everywhere, in the cities as in the rural areas. Without the help of the indigenous administration, local police, and to some extent local population, in the absence of archival documentation, which in most locations was burned or evacuated by the retreating Soviet authorities, the Germans would have difficulty identifying the Jews. In the ghettoization and expropriation processes, the indigenous administration also played an important role.

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL POLICE FORCE

During the early days of the occupation, it quickly became clear to the Germans that the strength of their police forces were not enough to deal with all police issues. The huge area, which included thousands of towns and villages, home to many millions of inhabitants, required large numbers of police and a widespread deployment in the area. Also, the special tasks with which Himmler was entrusted in Operation Barbarossa, including the murder of Jews, required large numbers of police personnel. In all the other European countries occupied by Germany, local police forces continued to operate and to serve the interests of the German occupier. In the Soviet Union, the local police force—which was known locally as the militia—was evacuated along with the other Soviet governing bodies. Thus the German administration, both military and civil—and especially the SS and police—were obliged to establish a local police force of their own.

According to an order issued by the commander of Army Group Center rear area, dated July 7, 1941: “In carrying out security/police missions, the *Bürgermeister*s must be instructed to recruit an auxiliary police force (*Ordnungsdienst/Hilfspolizei*) consisting of reliable people from among the *Folksdeutsche*, the Belorussian population, and, if there are not enough [people] among these, from among the Poles, too, and to operate them in coordination with the *Sipo* commanders.”²⁵ Similar action was taken by the military administration of the rear areas of Army Groups North and South. In some places the military commander announced in a local newspaper the formation of a police force, and people responded to such a call.²⁶

In the villages, the military administration ordered the appointment of a policeman for every 100 inhabitants; in towns the number was ten policemen to 1,000 inhabitants and an additional policeman for every additional 300 inhabitants. These policemen were equipped with rifles, taken from Soviet booty. Aside from regular police duties, the local police were required to carry out duties of a political character and to act against hostile elements.²⁷

The indigenous police force obeyed the local military administration. The municipal authorities were entitled to operate the police in all spheres under their jurisdiction, like street cleaning, traffic control, etc.²⁸ Following Hitler's July 17, 1941, directive, entrusting Himmler with the police security of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, Himmler issued a secret document on July 25, 1941, directed to the Higher SS and Police Leaders in the East:

The police tasks in the occupied Eastern Territories cannot be fulfilled solely with the deployed and yet-to-be deployed Police and SS forces. It is, therefore necessary that additional Schutzformationen (protective units) from those ethnic groups suitable to us in the conquered areas be established in an accelerated manner, as has in part already been done by the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police. First and foremost, these Schutzformationen are to be established with Ukrainians, the occupants of the Baltic states, and the Belorussians. They are to be selected from the males still available locally, and from the noncommunist prisoners of war.²⁹

The contents of this document contradict things that Hitler had said nine days earlier, on July 16, at a meeting in his headquarters, that "there must be an ironbound principle: no one [from the west of Ural] must ever be allowed to bear arms except the Germans." Himmler soon learned that reality in the occupied territories made it necessary to behave differently.

In the territories under military administration, the establishment of a local police force (Ordnungsdienst/Hilfspolizei: auxiliary police) was in many cases imposed on the appointed by the Orts or Feldkommandanturen Bürgermeister, who carried out a selection of people for this unit under German supervision. In some places the military commander announced in a local newspaper the formation of a police force, and people responded to such a call.³⁰

Recruitment into the police was conducted on a voluntary basis. Anti-Soviet and nationalistic motives and material expectations (mainly by plunder or distribution of Jewish property) served as incentives to join the indigenous police force. Prisoners of war, who volunteered to serve in the Schutzmannschaften, many of them Ukrainians, did it mainly in order to survive the terrible conditions in the camps.³¹ All volunteers had to commit themselves to a year's service, with the

2. MANPOWER IN THE SCHUTZMANNSCHAFTS
AND THE ORPO, 1941–42

REGION	1941		1942	
	SCHUTZ- MANNSCHAFTS	GERMAN ORPO	SCHUTZ- MANNSCHAFTS	GERMAN ORPO
Ostland	31,652	3,439	54,984	4,442
Ukraine	14,452	3,880	105,000	10,194
Military administration	—	4,751	140,000	14,194
TOTAL	46,104	12,070	299,984	28,830

NOTE: No data is available on the number of Schutzmannschaften in the regions of military administration in 1941.

option to cease the service within that year on the grounds of urgent economic or personal circumstances. Authority for cessation of service was in the hands of the German officer in command of the police unit.³²

Apart from the Baltic people, the officers of the Schutzmannschaften usually were members of the German police. Often, due to a shortage of officers, German sergeants would fill the posts of officers. Local inhabitants filled lower-ranking command positions.

The Schutzmannschaften units were subordinated to the German ORPO. They were organized along the same lines as the ORPO: individual service (Einzeldienst) consisting of policemen in municipal and rural police stations, and police bat-talions (Schutzmannschaften-Bataillone), which were concentrated in camps and were mobile, similar to army units. Overall authority for the ORPO and the various Schutzmannschaften units was in the hands of the Higher ss and Police Leaders. Karl Dietrich, who was in charge of organizing the Schutzmannschaften units in east Belorussia, testified:

I arrived in Mogilev in mid-October 1941. . . . My job was to establish the Schutzmannschafts from among the foreign nations [Fremdvölkische]. For this purpose I toured the prisoner of war camps. . . . During my term in office, I recruited between 5,000 and 6,000 Ukrainians and other Soviet citizens. The people I recruited were organized in the Mogilev region into companies and battalions. . . . Those Ukrainians were posted in Mogilev as guards. They were also used in the war against the partisans.³³

3. SCHUTZMÄNNER SERVING IN AUTUMN 1942

	OSTLAND	UKRAINE	MILITARY ADMINISTRATION
Police stations	31,804	70,000	
Police battalions	23,758	35,000	140,000
TOTAL	55,562	105,000	140,000

NOTE: In 1942 the Schutzmannschaften composed more than 90 percent of the police forces in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. No statistics are available regarding the distribution of Schutzmannschaften between police stations and battalions, in the areas of military administration.

SOURCE: Büchler, “Local Police Units,” 75; Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, 173–205.

Each police battalion had between 450 and 500 policemen. Sixty battalions were established in Ostland. In Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the number was between 70 and 80. According to a German document summing up the history of the Schutzmannschaften in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, whose problems were similar to those in other parts of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union:

Conscription to the service was on a voluntary basis. . . . As for their ethnic origin, many Poles served with the police, especially in the western regions of Belorussia; and there were also Russians and Ukrainians. . . . In July 1941 a unit was founded in Minsk consisting of 910 people. It was made up of Ukrainian prisoners of war released from POW camps in Minsk and its surrounds. . . . The constant deterioration in the security situation in Belorussia made it imperative already in the winter of 1941–42 to reinforce the protection of property in Minsk. Thus, apart from the Ukrainian unit, out of which two Schutzmannschaften-Bataillone had been established, it was necessary to bring a further two battalions of Lithuanian Schutzmannschaften to Belorussia. Renewed partisan activity in the spring of 1942 made it necessary to bring in more Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian Schutzmannschaften-Bataillone. . . . The order to establish a Belorussian Schutzmannschaften battalion was issued in August 1941. An encouraging early period of organization was followed by a serious regression. After all the unsuitable candidates had been rejected, for physical reasons and because of defection, the number of men in the battalion dropped over three weeks from 560 to only 180. . . . The following are details on the Schutzmannschaften battalions currently in operation in Belorussia:

four Lithuanian battalions; two Latvian battalions; seven Ukrainian battalions; one unit of Ukrainian artillery gunners; one Belorussian battalion. . . . The enemy's propaganda machine made good use of events on the battlefield during the last winter [1942–43]. The result was widespread defection of Ukrainians and Belorussians from the Schutzmannschaften and serious friction with the German commanders. . . . These phenomena have ceased now. . . . Reality has shown that all nations among the Schutzmannschaften, under proper commanders, ignore hostile propaganda and are capable of carrying out their tasks most efficiently.³⁴

It appears from this document that most of the people in the Schutzmannschaften, especially in the battalions, were recruited from the Baltic states and the Ukraine. Recruitment of Belorussians was problematic. The ratio between the Schutzmannschaften and German members of the ORPO was ten to one, in other words, ten local policemen to each German policeman. Many of the German policemen held administrative positions in the ORPO headquarters, which reduced the number of policemen on active duty in the field. Most men in the Schutzmannschaften were active in the field. The 300,000 men in the Schutzmannschaften were also the main force at the disposal of the SS authorities in carrying out their anti-Jewish policy in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Some basic training, which included drill and use of weapons, was given to the Schutzmannen. Training courses of NCOs was carried out in special schools organized in each district.³⁵

In order to make the local policemen more ideologically reliable, Himmler instructed the Order Police on June 1942 to focus on political training of the Schutzmannschaften. He and Rosenberg decided to establish educational training schools for the Schutzmannschaften in some places in the occupied territories, and they outlined the goals of the indoctrination program, which should put emphasis on “stirring up the strong instinctual anti-Semitism of the eastern people” by drawing attention to “the Jewish face of Bolshevism” and “Jewish world conspiracies.” Germany was portrayed in this indoctrination as bringing liberation, culture, and a flourishing economy to the people of the Soviet Union in contrast to the terror, hunger, and crime that Judeo-Bolshevism represents.³⁶

The Schutzmannschaften, as a rule, were loyal to their German masters. They carried out their orders in the killing operations against the Jews, even in the persecution of their own people, and in fights against Soviet partisans. Basic anticommunist and nationalistic feelings and anti-Semitism, which were common to the majority of those who volunteered, served as fertile soil for the anti-Jewish indoctrination they received during their service. They not only carried out orders from their German superiors but they also demonstrated initiative

in hunting down and killing Jews, even in cases when they acted, mainly in rural areas, without the attendance of Germans. The indigenous police forces became an essential tool for the implementation of the Final Solution in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union.³⁷

LOHSE'S PROVISIONAL DIRECTIVES
AND ROSENBERG'S "BROWN FILE"

One of the first documents published by Reichskommissar Lohse on August 13, 1941, was the "Provisional Directives Concerning the Treatment of Jews in the Area of the Reichskommissariat Ostland":

The final solution of the Jewish question in the area of Reichskommissariat Ostland will be in accordance with the instructions in my address of July 27, 1941, in Kaunas. If further measures are taken, especially by the Sipo . . . , they will not be affected by the following provisional directives. It is merely the purpose of these provisional directives to ensure that as long as further measures for the final solution are not possible, minimum measures will be taken by the Generalkommissars or Gebietskommissars. . . . A Jew is a person descended from at least three grandparents who are fully Jewish by race. Further, a Jew is a person descended from one or two grandparents who are Jewish by race, and

1. He belongs or belonged to a religious Jewish community, or
2. On, or after June 20, 1941, he was married to a Jewess, according to the definition in these directives, or who now, or in the future, enters such a relationship.

In cases of doubt, the Gebietskommissar will decide who is a Jew, in accordance with his best judgment and within the definitions in these directives. The Generalkommissars will issue immediate orders to take the following measures, in the area under their jurisdiction:

Jews must be registered. . . . Jews must be singled out by wearing a visible six-cornered yellow star. . . . Jewish property is to be confiscated and secured. . . . All Jewish property is to be registered . . . even if it is in the hands of non-Jews. . . . There's a duty to hand over [Jewish] property. . . . The Generalkommissars will issue immediate orders regarding the handing over of these objects: local and foreign currency, shares . . . valuables of all kinds. . . .

For their subsistence, the Jewish population may keep minimal basic household utensils and money for daily subsistence, 0.20 Marks (2 rubles) per head. Money will be released for one month in advance.

The following further measures are to be striven for vigorously, with due consideration for local conditions and especially economic conditions:

The rural areas [*Flacheland*] are to be cleansed of Jews. . . . As far as this is possible, Jews must be concentrated in towns or in sections of large towns in which the population is predominantly Jewish. Ghettos are to be established there. . . . In the ghettos, the Jews are to receive only as much food as the rest of the population can spare. . . . In order to close the ghetto hermetically from without, an auxiliary police force can be established from among the local population. Jews fit for work will be drafted for forced labor. . . . Private factories and people for whom this forced labor will be carried out will pay the Gebietskommissar, who in turn will pay the forced laborers.³⁸

Before publication, the draft of these provisional directives were sent, in early August, to the Einsatzgruppe A headquarters. The draft did not include the following: "If further measures are taken, especially by the Sipo . . . , they will not be affected by the following provisional directives. It is merely the purpose of these provisional directives to ensure that where and as long as further measures for the final solution are not possible, minimum measures will be taken by the Generalkommissars or Gebietskommissars." This sentence, which expresses preference for the murderous acts carried out by the Einsatzgruppen over all other anti-Jewish measures taken by the civil administration, was introduced according to the demand of the commander of Einsatzgruppe A, in a letter to Lohse, dated August 6, 1941.³⁹

The anti-Jewish measures adopted by Koch's civil government in Reichskommissariat Ukraine were a continuation of those carried out by the military administration, and they followed the orders issued by Rosenberg's Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories. Anti-Jewish rulings appeared in the newspaper published by the civil administration. In a document dated November 3, 1941, entitled "Provisional Orders: Taxes and Other Financial Matters in Reichskommissariat Ukraine," Koch informed the public at large that institutions and manufacturing plants that employ Jews would hand over to the German administration the difference between the salaries of non-Jews and the wages they paid to Jews, which were lower.⁴⁰

On September 3, 1941, the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories published "Civil Administration in the Occupied Eastern Territories," which was called the "brown file." This comprehensive document had a special chapter devoted to the Jewish issue, which made no mention of the fact that a full-scale annihilation of Jews was taking place in those areas, although there is no doubt that Rosenberg was aware of it. This document included the following instructions:

1. General. All measures to be taken with regard to the Jewish question in the occupied territories in the east must be based on the premise that the Jewish issue must reach a comprehensive solution in all of Europe after the war. . . .
2. Population. In Belorussia and the Ukraine, for example, there is a Jewish population of several million. . . . A special group consists of those Soviet Jews who followed the Red Army during 1939–40 to eastern Poland, western Ukraine, western Belorussia, the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. . . . Top priority goes to severe measures against those Jews who settled in the territories that were annexed to the Soviet Union during the past two years. . . . The rest of the Jewish population there must be taken control of by way of a compulsory population census. All Jews will be identified by an obvious mark (a Jewish yellow star).
3. . . . One of the primary objectives has to be the absolute separation of the Jews from the rest of society. Since the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Jews, especially in the central areas of the Soviet Union, have been trying to conceal their identity in order to rise to key positions in the administration. Many Jews have denied their religion and changed their first and family names to Russian names. It must be stipulated that, when taking part in the population census, the Jews will report on any change of names . . . in order to annul these changes. The same applies to all those who previously left the religion of Moses. . . . The Jews' freedom of movement must be curtailed immediately. Action must be taken to transfer them to ghettos. . . .
4. In face of the supreme importance of economic missions resulting from the war in the east, care must be taken—concurrently with any anti-Jewish measures—not to cause any significant harm to basic economic interests. . . . Jewish industrial workers, artisans, and domestic workers (in productive cooperatives) will be allowed to continue in their professions . . . under the supervision of the civil administration. Most of the Jewish population must be directed to agricultural work. . . . All Jewish property must be registered.
5. Jews must be separated without delay from all cultural activity of the general population, and their activity must be restricted to internal Jewish institutions. . . . Jewish religious ritual will be permitted only within the bounds of the ghetto. [Ritual] slaughter will be forbidden.⁴¹

Amendments were obviously introduced to the rulings in the brown file at the end of August, and a final draft was passed on to Ostland—where the rulings were to be implemented—on September 3, 1941.

It was a time of spectacular victories on all fronts, and the German army advanced swiftly toward its objectives. Germany's leaders were already envisioning the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Moscow and Leningrad by winter.⁴² And it is against this background that the sentence from the brown file, "the Jewish issue must reach a comprehensive solution in all of Europe after the war," should be viewed. Rosenberg surely reckoned on the end of the war and Germany's victory in terms of mere months. We can learn his intentions regarding a "comprehensive solution" from his November 18, 1941, speech to his ministry staff, which was classified "secret and not for publication." Thus, according to Rosenberg, "some six million Jews still live in eastern Europe. This issue can be solved only through the biological liquidation of all of Europe's Jewry. As far as Germany is concerned, the Jewish issue can only be solved when the last of its Jews is no longer on German land; from Europe's point of view—when not a single Jew can be found on the European continent, as far as the Urals."⁴³

The instructions in the brown file as relayed to Ostland had no bearing on reality in the field. The Higher ss and Police Leaders and the Einsatzgruppen who considered themselves responsible for all matters pertaining to the Jews acted in accordance with the authority granted them by Himmler and Heydrich—their purpose being to annihilate the Jews. The brown file written for Reichskommissariat Ukraine arrived there in December 1941. Fundamentally the Jewish chapter in it was similar to the file written for Ostland, but several sentences had been deleted that were interpreted as easing up on the Jews, and all that remained were the prohibitions imposed on the Jews.⁴⁴ It is easy enough to assume that these omissions came as a result of lessons learned in the field after the publication of the rulings in Ostland.

A letter signed by Heydrich to Rosenberg and dated January 10, 1942, shows the negative reaction of the ss to the Jewish chapter in the brown file: "Unfortunately, I cannot agree with the contents of the document. . . . Jewish issues have to be carried out under police authority, and I must insist that instructions on dealing with the Jewish question must be determined and discussed by RSHA," the man in charge, Sturmbanführer Adolph Eichmann.⁴⁵ Heydrich saw the Jewish chapter in the brown file as interference on the part of Rosenberg in issues for which he himself was responsible. The file was published at the height of preparations for the Wannsee Conference, which took place on January 20, 1942.⁴⁶

On January 29, 1942, Heydrich sent Rosenberg "Instructions for Dealing with the Jewish Question," in which Heydrich recommended introducing the following changes to the brown file:

1. General. On the Jewish question in the occupied eastern territories, all measures must be based on the assumption that an all-European solution must be found for the Jewish question. Thus . . . no measures had to be taken in the eastern territories that would prevent the final solution to the Jewish question and bring about the annihilation of the Jewry. Especially in the occupied eastern territories, attempts must be made to find a swift solution to the Jewish question. . . .
2. Economic Activity. All measures that serve the extermination of Jews must be carried out, with no consideration of economic interests.⁴⁷

The words relating to a solution to the Jewish question after the war were removed, which makes it obvious that the solution was actually being carried out as the war proceeded. And the second clause contradicted its counterpart in the brown file, which determined the need to ensure that anti-Jewish measures did not harm basic economic interests. Heydrich's amendments were not introduced to the brown file, since reality in the field, according to which the SS worked virtually undisturbed at liquidating the Jews, needed no further versions of the orders they had already received.

WHO IS A JEW?

A definition of Jewishness was necessary, so as to make it quite clear which sectors of society at large were subject to the anti-Jewish measures. According to the military administration, a "Jew" was defined as "someone, three of whose grandparents were absolutely Jewish by race. A Jew is also the mixed-race offspring of two grandparents who are absolutely Jewish by race and he belongs to a religious Jewish community or was accepted by such later, or he is married to a Jew, or subsequently married a Jew."⁴⁸

This definition as published by the military administration in Ukraine was identical to the definition of Jew according to the Nuremberg Laws. Although no central definition by OKW or OKH was found, 454 Security Division did not decide on the definition on their own but received such orders from army high command, and it was used by the military administration in the areas under their jurisdiction. The definition accepted by the German civil administration in the occupied territories was harsher than that of the Nuremberg Laws. In his provisional directives, Lohse defined a Jew as someone who had one or two grandparents who were complete Jews and who belonged to the Jewish religious community or was married to a Jew. Thus it was sufficient for one and not two of his grandparents to be a Jew in order for him to be considered a Jew—with

the additional condition that he belonged to a Jewish community or maintained marital bonds with a Jew.

According to these definitions, which were published during the first weeks of the occupation, no direct mention was made of the fate of mixed families, of which one of the partners was a Jew, nor was it made sufficiently clear what attitude should be taken toward the offspring of such families, of which there were many thousands. Such matters were the subject of debate and decision among the highest ranks in the German government in Berlin as well as in the occupied Soviet territories for several months after the occupation.⁴⁹

IMPLEMENTING “TEMPORARY” ANTI-JEWISH MEASURES

The German administration’s “temporary” anti-Jewish measures were being implemented at the same time that the Einsatzgruppen and other SS and police units continued their efforts to annihilate the Jewish population. The “temporary” measures included marking Jews with a yellow star, establishing Jewish councils, confining the Jews in ghettos, and using them as slaves. Before being forced into ghettos, the Jews were informed of these measures from notices on public billboards or announcements in the local press. Once they were in the ghettos, any edicts and restrictions were made known to the Jews via the Jewish councils.

Marking the Jews and Other Edicts

The first directive to be published by the military administration dealt with marking the Jews. This marking was not uniform and differed from place to place. According to an order published in Vilnius on July 4, 1941, all Jews had to wear a patch, ten centimeters in circumference, in a prominent place on their clothing. When the city came under civil administration on August 2, the Gebietskommissar ordered all Jews to wear a yellow Star of David on their left chest and back. The same order forbade Jews to walk on sidewalks and allowed them only to walk in single file on the right side of the road; they also were forbidden to visit public parks or to use public transportation. Similar orders were published in other occupied towns and cities. In Kaunas, the first anti-Jewish orders, published on July 10, demanded that the Jews move forthwith into a ghetto and that any Jews who escaped from the city would not be readmitted. Anyone trying to return would be arrested. In Grodno, the Jews were required to mark their homes with a Star of David.⁵⁰

Orders of the military government in Volhynia, published on July 22, required

that Jews be employed in repairing houses damaged in battles, repair roads, etc. Further, some of the money for the repairs would come from “contributions” imposed on the Jews.⁵¹ The military commander of Lvov published an announcement on July 8, 1941, according to which Jews were required to wear a white armband. This order was not enforced on Jews with foreign citizenship.⁵² In the old territories of the Soviet Union, most of which had been under military rule until the Germans withdrew from them, there was no uniform marking of Jews. In Minsk, Bobruisk, and other towns in Belorussia, Jews were forced to wear a yellow patch on their chests and backs.⁵³ In the town of Viasma, Jews were required to wear a band on their left arm with a yellow patch attached to it.⁵⁴ In Dnepropetrovsk and other Ukrainian cities, Jews were required to wear a white armband, while in Mariupol in the Ukraine and in Yevpatoria in the Crimea, the Jews had to wear the yellow Star of David.⁵⁵

The military administration ordered the entire population to hand over radio receivers, weapons, and other military equipment. It also imposed a nighttime curfew that was shorter for the general population than for the Jews. The only legal currency permitted was the ruble or the German mark (ten rubles were worth one mark). All directives were also enforceable on the Jews, and some of them also announced that hostages would be taken and that these would be executed if the laws were breached. In Vilnius the population was informed that sixty Jews and twenty Poles were being held hostage.⁵⁶

At that time the Lithuanians, who cooperated with the Germans, were enjoying preferential treatment, and no Lithuanian hostages were taken. An army directive, dated October 10, 1941, regarding sabotage activity in the Ukraine determined the number of hostages as being in accordance with population sizes. Thus a town with a population of up to 1,000 people would provide five hostages, and in larger towns, ten hostages would be taken for each 1,000 inhabitants. Moreover, of the hostages, 50 percent would always be Jews and the remainder would be Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles in equal proportions.⁵⁷ Some of the directives did not require that Ukrainians be taken hostage.

In certain places the Jews had been murdered during the first days of the occupation, even before any restrictions had been imposed on them. Directives issued by OKH for the military administration were not always sufficiently detailed, which placed decisions regarding anti-Jewish measures in the hands of local Ortskommandants. This was especially true with regard to timing: in certain towns, the orders were carried out in the first days of occupation, in others only weeks later.

After taking control of the rear areas, the civil administration republished the anti-Jewish directives, which were uniform in character. All the Jews in Reichs-

kommissariats Ukraine and Ostland were marked with yellow patches on their backs and chests. In east Galicia, which had been annexed to the General Government, the Jews were marked with a white armband with a blue Star of David.

Jewish Councils

Establishing Jewish councils in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union proved more problematic than in other areas of German-occupied Europe, which, up to the German invasions, had had active Jewish communities and Jewish leadership. In a *Schnellbrief* (urgent letter) dated September 21, 1939, Heydrich informed the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen in Poland that “in every Jewish community a Jewish council of elders must be established, consisting of people with authority and the remaining rabbis.”⁵⁸ This order and orders issued by German Army Command served as a basis for the establishment of Jewish councils in occupied territories of the Soviet Union.

In the territories annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40, the Germans were still able to find sufficient rabbis and former Jewish community leaders from whom a Jewish council could be elected. Vilnius was a classic example of the way in which a Jewish council was established in the annexed territories. On July 4, 1941, a car drew up at the synagogue on Jewish Street (Yiddischer Gass) and two Germans stepped out. They asked for the rabbi of Vilnius. The town beadle was brought to them. He made it clear that the chief rabbi, Y. Rubinstein, was in the United States and that the second rabbi, Khaim Ozer Grodzenski, had died. The Germans said, “If that’s the situation, you are the rabbi,” and they ordered him to prepare a list of Jewish representatives ready for presentation the following day. The beadle went to the former secretary of the community, who called several people for a consultation. The Jewish council was elected from over fifty participants at that meeting. All the members were public figures and intellectuals. Some of them were reluctant to serve on the Jewish council, but, feeling that they had no choice, most agreed to accept the position.⁵⁹

In Kaunas, Jewish activists convened a committee even before the establishment of the official Jewish council. The committee contacted the German and Lithuanian authorities in an attempt to end the pogrom and the abduction of Jews on the streets. The members of this committee formed the nucleus of the Jewish council, which was headed by a distinguished physician and public figure, Dr. Elhanan Elkes, who was elected on August 5.⁶⁰ On July 22, when the city of Lvov was still under military administration, the Ukrainian mayor, Dr. Y. Polanski, appointed a Jewish committee under the leadership of the eminent Dr. Josef Parnes. This committee, which consisted at first of eight public figures, was extended and became a Jewish council, after August 1, when east

Galicia was annexed to the General Government.⁶¹ In this way Jewish councils were formed in other cities and towns in west Ukraine and west Belorussia. In many towns, especially the smaller ones, where no representation of the military administration existed, the local municipality formed the Jewish council, and in many places the Jews chose their representative body even before the order came to establish Jewish councils, in order to ask the German authorities to alleviate their conditions.⁶²

In Bessarabia and north Bukovina, the Romanian authorities were the ones to establish Jewish councils in those places in which they had established ghettos. A Jewish council was appointed in Kishiniev on August 1, 1941, only days after the establishment of the ghetto; the Jewish council was made up of twenty-two people from among the “Jewish intelligentsia.”⁶³ Following the occupation of Chernovtsy in early July 1941, the Romanian mayor appointed a Jewish council headed by Dr. Sigmund Neuberger.⁶⁴

In most parts of the territories annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40, a similar system was used in forming the Jewish councils: locating several public personalities and ordering them to convene a meeting of prominent persons and elect a Jewish council. The council chairman, his deputy, and the council then had to be approved by the German authorities. The chairmen usually spoke German, which made it easier to conduct direct dialogue with the authorities.

It was difficult for the Germans in the old areas of the Soviet Union to find Jewish community leaders on whom to base local Jewish councils. These had already been liquidated by the Soviet authorities during the 1920s, along with all the Jewish institutions and organizations. Most of the well-known Soviet Jewish activists had escaped or been evacuated to the Soviet Union. The few who remained in the occupied territories were the first to be annihilated for being communists and Jews. The Germans were, therefore, obliged to form the Jewish councils in these regions out of “run-of-the-mill” Jews.

The composition of the Minsk Jewish Council is typical. In early July, only days after the city was conquered, the Germans arrested ten Jews in the street, led them to the military administration building, and informed them that, from then on, they would be the Jewish council, whose task it was to carry out the Germans’ orders. After ascertaining that he spoke a little German, they appointed Eliyahu Mushkin, an engineer by profession, to the post of chairman.⁶⁵ In other places, such as Yevpatoria in the Crimea, Jewish councils were formed in a similar fashion. The military administration did not always use the term “Jewish council.” In order to deceive the Jews of Stavropol in the southeastern region of occupied Russia, the Germans gave the name “Jewish Committee to Protect the Interests of the Jewish Population” to the council they had formed. On October

10, 1941, the German authorities in Mariupol, on the banks of the Sea of Azov, ordered the election of a Jewish committee responsible “for the good conduct of the Jewish population.”⁶⁶

In Kharkov the Jews were informed on December 14, 1941, that they were to move into the ghetto and to elect a “representative” to serve on their behalf—a kind of chairman without a Jewish council. The old doctor, Gurevitch, was elected or appointed to this position.⁶⁷ In many parts of the Soviet Union’s old territories, including Kiev, Jews were murdered during the early days of the occupation without ever having established a Jewish council.

Already at the onset of occupation, the German authorities forced the Jewish councils to collect from the Jews large sums of money and valuables and to pass it on to them. The Jews coined this collection of money “contribution,” or levy. It was the job of the Jewish councils to supervise the collection and transfer of money or its equal value in gold, diamonds, etc. Often members of the Jewish council or other groups of Jews were arrested and held hostage to ensure the successful collection of the levy. The money and valuables were collected under threats that the hostages would be executed if the Jews failed to supply the sums demanded of them. Many Jews tried to believe that by acquiescing to the “contribution,” they would be spared further edicts.⁶⁸

Forced Labor

Forced labor, which was imposed on male as well as female Jews, was one of the worst nightmares in those days before the onset of the final, full-scale physical annihilation. The military administration ordered all Jewish males between 14 and 60 and all Jewish females between 16 and 50 to perform immediate forced labor. Rosenberg ordered on August 16, 1941, that all Jews, male and female ages 14 to 60 were subject to forced labor and that anyone who eluded labor would be imprisoned and in severe cases of evasion punished by death.⁶⁹

The forced labor in which Jews were employed was mostly of a kind that served the German military and civil administrations, army units, and municipal authorities. Once German private enterprise began taking hold in the occupied territories, this, too, employed Jews in forced labor, with permission from the local German authorities. In general, the Jews were not paid for their work, and if they were, their wages were minimal. Directives issued by the office of the inspector of economy in Army Group Center on August 7, 1941, regarding the salaries and work conditions in the region under military administration stated that Jews were not entitled to any kind of payment. When payment was due to Jews under exceptional circumstances, they were to receive 80 percent of the going rate. The remaining 20 percent had to be deposited in an account.⁷⁰

Lohse's temporary directive stated that "private factories and people for whom this forced labor will be carried out will pay the Gebietskommissar, who in turn will pay the forced laborers." Actually in rare cases the Jews received some payment for their work, but the money was usually used by the military and civil administrations for their own needs.

During the first weeks of the occupation, before Jewish forced labor became organized and institutionalized, German soldiers and local policemen snatched Jews off the streets and set them to work on such jobs as clearing away destroyed houses, conducting road and railway repairs, and burying the corpses of Red Army soldiers.⁷¹ Forced labor was often accompanied by abuse and mistreatment.

All matters pertaining to forced Jewish labor came under the authority of the German military government's finance and economy departments and the civil government's labor exchanges. These bureaus passed on their orders for Jewish labor to the Jewish councils, whose responsibility it was to supply the manpower. Jewish artisans were usually sent to work in their own professions and were employed as cobblers, tailors, metal workers, etc., jobs at which almost only Jews worked. Jews were made to work until the very day they were taken away and exterminated—whether this took weeks or months. In a few places, the exploitation of Jewish labor continued for up to three years, almost until the liberation of the region by the Soviet army.

Ghettos

The ghettos established in 1939–40 in the area of General Government in Poland constituted a stage in the policy of the "final solution to the Jewish question" and preceded the liquidation stage. As Heydrich wrote in his Schnellbrief dated September 21, 1939: "For the time being, the first prerequisite for the final aim is the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger cities."⁷² It is obvious from this that "concentration of the Jews" was but an early step toward a later stage which he coined "the final aim" without clarifying what this meant.

There were no later stages in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, and the ghettos were established simultaneously with the annihilation of the Jews—in some places, indeed, even after most of the Jews had already been murdered. Ghettos were not usually erected in those places where it was possible to liquidate the Jews during the first months of occupation. Nonetheless, the huge spaces, the dispersal of Jews over many hundreds of cities, towns, and villages, the relatively large numbers of Jews as compared with the size of the Einsatzgruppen and other ss forces who perpetrated the murders, the time it took to establish local auxiliary police forces—all these meant that extermination took many months to achieve.

In the areas under military administration, the OKH granted Feldkommandanturen and Ortskommandanturen freedom of choice in the establishment of ghettos: “ghettos will be established in places with large Jewish communities—and when this is essential and practical . . . and that this will not harm more urgent tasks.” In fact, the military administration established ghettos in some places during the first weeks of occupation and decided against establishing ghettos in other places. It all depended on local conditions (housing, local population, traffic) and was decided by the local military commander.

In the “brown file,” with regard to areas under civil administration, Rosenberg pointed out that “action must be taken to transfer the Jews to ghettos,” whereas in his provisional instructions Lohse wrote that the Jews had to be concentrated in ghettos, but only “as far as this was possible.” Thus the Gebietskommissars were able to decide when and where to establish the ghetto in the area under their jurisdiction, and, indeed, there were considerable differences between one place and another.

As a temporary solution, the ghetto enabled the German authorities to concentrate in one place all the Jewish workers, artisans, and professionals it needed in order to fully exploit them for the German war economy and to postpone their annihilation. The “provisional” and manifest anti-Jewish actions taken by both the military and civil German administrations—especially in forcing Jews to wear white armbands and yellow stars and concentrating them in ghettos—made it easier for the SS to carry out the wholesale murder of Jews.

FOUR

Mass Murder, First Stage:

June 22, 1941, to Winter 1941-42

IO

Einsatzgruppen Routes of Advance and Method of Extermination

STAGES IN ANNIHILATION PROCESS

The annihilation of Jews in the Soviet Union began with the invasion of Nazi Germany and proceeded unhindered until the expulsion of the German army from the occupied territories of Soviet Union. The tempo was not uniform, and there were periods in which the murder actions moved at great speed and others in which the pace was slower. Several factors influenced the timetable as well as the scope of the actions: the date on which the Einsatzgruppen arrived; the presence of additional German or local forces necessary for carrying out the murder; seasons of the year (the harsh winter and frozen earth made it hard to dig pits); the number of Jews in any given place; and the local need for a temporary Jewish workforce. According to these factors, the annihilation process may be divided into three distinct stages:

Stage I: From June 22, 1941, to the end of winter 1941–42: Most of the Jews of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, east Belorussia, east Ukraine, and the occupied territories of the Russian Republic, Bessarabia, and north Bukovina were murdered.

Stage II: From spring 1942 until the winter of 1942–43: Most of the Jews of west Belorussia, west Ukraine, and the southern regions of Russia, conquered in summer and autumn 1942, were murdered.

Stage III: From early spring 1943 to summer 1944: By this stage the German army had retreated from Soviet territories. The Jews remaining until that time in ghettos or labor camps were murdered or evacuated to concentration camps in Germany.

THE EINSATZGRUPPEN AND THEIR ADVANCE ROUTES

The routes of advance of the Einsatzgruppen and the timetable of their arrival in the areas of activity marked the bloody map of the extermination process. In the places they crossed, they left behind thousands of victims.

Einsatzgruppe A

On the eve of the invasion of the Soviet Union, Einsatzgruppe A, which included Einsatzkommandos 1, 2, and 3, was concentrated in east Prussia, in the vicinity of Gumbinnen. The zone of action of Einsatzgruppe A was the Baltic states, the rear areas of Army Group North, and its final objective was Leningrad.¹

Sonderkommando 1a, a forward unit of Einsatzgruppe A, whose objective was Estonia and the region south of Leningrad, entered Kaunas on June 25, 1941. On July 8, Sonderkommando 1b arrived at Daugavpils and continued from there to Pskov area. Units belonging to Einsatzkommando 2 deployed in various regions in Latvia. Subunits belonging to Einsatzkommando 3 deployed in various regions in Lithuania.

Stahlecker, commander of Einsatzgruppe A, arrived in Kaunas on June 25, 1941. From there he moved to Riga and finally to Pskov in mid-July. In early October, the Einsatzgruppe A headquarters set up base in Krasnogvardeisk, 40 kilometers south of Leningrad. With the establishment of Reichkommissariat Ostland, Stahlecker was appointed commander of the Sipo in Ostland. He continued to command Einsatzgruppe A in the area south of Leningrad, which was under military administration. Since Leningrad was not conquered, the Einsatzkommandos of Einsatzgruppe A became permanent Sipo authorities in Ostland: Einsatzkommando 3 in Lithuania, Einsatzkommando 2 in Latvia, and Einsatzkommando 1 in Estonia. The Sipo headquarters in Generalkommissariat Belorussia was composed of members of the disbanded Sonderkommando 1b reinforced by members from other units. Stahlecker was killed on March 23, 1942, in a fight with partisans near the Leningrad front, and he was replaced by Brigadeführer Heinz Jost.

Einsatzgruppe B

Einsatzgruppe B with its subunits, Einsatzkommandos 7, 8, and 9, arrived at the Warsaw region in General Government on June 24, 1941. Its zone of activity consisted of the rear area of Army Group Center and included Belorussia and parts of central Russia; its final objective was Moscow. Sonderkommando 7a

arrived in Vilnius on June 30 and left for Minsk on July 3. Sonderkommando 7b moved via Brest-Litovsk and Baranovichi and arrived in Minsk on July 4. From Minsk some subunits of Einsatzkommando 7 moved eastward to Vitebsk and Orsha. Einsatzkommando 8 arrived in Bialystock on July 1 and went on from there to the Slonim and Baranovichi regions. Subunits of Einsatzkommando 8 deployed over the Borisov and Slutsk regions, before moving on to Bobruisk and Gomel. Einsatzkommando 9 arrived in Vilnius on July 2 and stayed for about three weeks before moving to Vitebsk, and its subunits were deployed in the Polotsk, Nevel, and Surazh regions. One of its subunits was active in the Grodno area in July 1941. After the German forces renewed their advance toward Moscow, Einsatzkommando 9 moved to Viasma and its subunits arrived in Gzhatsk and Mozhaisk, in the vicinity of the Soviet capital. Sonderkommando 7a moved to Rzhev and the Kalinin region, northwest of Moscow. Sonderkommando 7b moved to the Orel and Kursk areas and up to Tula, south of Moscow. This constituted the forward-most deployment of Einsatzgruppe B.

The commander of Einsatzgruppe B, Arthur Nebe, and his staff arrived at Minsk on July 5, before moving on to their final base at Smolensk a month later. Nebe was replaced in early November 1941 by Erich Naumann.

Einsatzgruppe C

Einsatzgruppe C with its subunits, Sonderkommandos 4a and 4b and Einsatzkommandos 5 and 7, arrived in east Galicia via the Krakow region in the General Government. Its area of activity consisted of the rear area of Army Group South in direction Kiev and east Ukraine. Sonderkommando 4a arrived at the Volhynian town of Lutsk on June 30 and continued its advance toward Rovno on July 6; from there it made its way to Novograd-Volynskii and Zhitomir, which it reached on July 18. On September 18, together with the army's advance units, it entered Kiev and moved on to Kharkov in November. Sonderkommando 4b reached Ternopol on July 5. It arrived in Vinnitsa during the second half of July; by August it was in Kirovograd, in early September, Kremenchug; in late September, Poltava; in early December, Kramatorskaya, and in March 1942, it reached the Stalino (Donetsk) region. Einsatzkommandos 5 and 6 arrived in Lvov in early July. Einsatzkommando 5 continued from there, via Dubno, Zhitomir, and Berdichev, and in September it was active in the Kiev area, Cherkassy, and Uman. Einsatzkommando 6 moved from Lvov to Proskurov; in September it continued to Krivoi-Rog, and in early October it began operating in Dnepropetrovsk and its surrounds; in November it moved to Zaporozhe and from there to Stalino. The Einsatzgruppe C headquarters with its commander, Otto Rasch, arrived in Lvov on July 1; on July 19, it was in Zhitomir, and on

September 24 it reached Kiev. In early October, the command of Einsatzgruppe C was handed over to Dr. Max Thomas, who was appointed commander of the Sipo in Reichskommissariat Ukraine. At the same time, he continued in his post of commander of Einsatzgruppe C, some of whose subunits, Sonderkommando 4a and 4b and Einsatzkommando 6, continued to operate in the eastern Ukraine, which was under the control of the military administration. Einsatzkommando 5 was disbanded in late 1941 and January 1942, and its men were reassigned to the Sipo commands, in Generalkommissariats Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, and others.

Einsatzgruppe D

Einsatzgruppe D, together with its subunits, Sonderkommandos 10a, 10b, 11a, and 11b and Einsatzkommando 12, under the command of Otto Ohlendorf, was attached to the German Eleventh Army, which operated with the Romanian army in the regions of Bessarabia and south Ukraine. The final objective of Einsatzgruppe D was Crimea and the Caucasus region. It arrived in the area of Piatra-Neamt in Romania, in the vicinity of the border with Bessarabia on July 5, 1941. After crossing the border, Sonderkommando 10a arrived in Beltsy; Sonderkommando 10b entered Chernovtsy with the Romanian army on July 5 and 6, 1941, and Sonderkommando 11a arrived in Kishinev during the second half of July 1941. The commander of the Eleventh Army entrusted Einsatzgruppe D with several temporary missions, outside of those for which it was founded, and ordered it to secure the crossings over the river Dnestr in order to prevent the Romanian authorities from expelling Jews and Russians from Bessarabia into the Ukraine.

During August 1941 Sonderkommando 10a was active in the area, known by the Romanians as Transnistria, between the rivers Dnestr and Bug. It arrived at Tagangrog, north of the Azov Sea in September, and its subunits operated in the Mariupol and Melitopol regions. In early August, Sonderkommando 10b transferred to Mogilev-Podolsky and from there, during the second half of September, to the southern region of the Dnepr; in early November, it arrived in Feodosia and Kerch in the Crimea. In mid-August, Sonderkommando 11a arrived in Nikolaev, during September and October it operated in the Kherson region and moved to the Yalta area in Crimea in November. Sonderkommando 11b moved from south Bessarabia to the vicinity of Odessa and entered the city in mid-October, when it was conquered. In mid-November it moved to the Crimea, and in mid-December it made its base in Simferopol. After completing its mission of securing the crossings on the Dnestr, Einsatzkommando 12 moved to Nikolaev and Zaporozhe, and in late October it was active in the region of Melitopol and Stalino. In early August Ohlendorf moved his headquarters from

Piatra-Neamt to the Yampol region in the Vinnitsa district and continued from there to Ananyev; in early October it moved on to Nikolaev, and in late November it set up base in Simferopol in Crimea.

Einsatzgruppen C and D continued to advance eastward and southward throughout the summer of 1942, moving behind the German army in the direction of Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

Liaison officers were attached by the Einsatzgruppen to the army headquarters responsible for the rear areas of Army Groups North, South, and Center. Their duty was coordination between the army and the Einsatzgruppen, while they were carrying out their missions. The commanders of the subunits of the Einsatzgruppen were provided with special documents issued by the army's rear area command which stated that "as a member of the Sonderkommando of the Sipo, the bearer of this document is obliged to carry out special police-security operations. Army officers and all other relevant personnel are asked to assist him in his mission."²

The wording of this document went further than the Heydrich-Wagner agreement regarding Einsatzgruppen activity in the regions under military control. According to the agreement, the Einsatzgruppen would be granted "freedom of movement" in these regions, whereas the document demanded that the army "help" the Einsatzgruppen to carry out their missions. The direct, field-level coordination between the Einsatzkommando and the army was carried out via the military police and the counterespionage department of military intelligence.

FROM MURDER OF MEN TO MASS MURDER

Himmler visited Minsk on August 14–15, 1941. This visit was widely discussed among historians and is connected with the crucial issue of whether on this occasion he issued an order for extermination of all the Jews, including women and children. According to the testimony of ss Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, the head of Himmler's personal staff, who accompanied Himmler on his tour in Minsk, it was Hitler who instructed Himmler to go to Minsk and discuss the partisan problem.³ For Hitler and Himmler, partisans and Jews were identical. In the evening of August 14, Himmler met with Bach-Zelewski, Nebe, Otto Brandisch (commander Einsatzkommando 8, or EK8), HSSPF Army Group North Prutzmann, and some other high-ranking ss officers. It may be assumed that during this discussion about the partisan movement and how to fight them and prevent their strengthening, they discussed how to liquidate the Jews. The following day, after watching an execution of Jews, Himmler delivered a speech to members of EK 8 who carried out the shootings. He legitimized the killings of

Jews as a necessary means of defense in an ideological war (*Weltanschauungskrieg*), and despite the psychic burden, it had to be carried out by them, and he bore the responsibility for these actions.⁴

According to postwar testimony by Brandisch, Nebe informed him before Himmler's arrival that there was a verbal order from Hitler according to which the Jews had to be exterminated totally, including women and children, and that he (Brandisch) could ask Himmler about this order during his visit in Minsk. Brandisch did ask Himmler, and the answer he got was that such an order from Hitler existed (Auf mein Fragen erklärte er mir dass ein Führerbefehl über die Erschiessung aller Juden vorliege).⁵

Brandisch's statement was countered by historians who claim that such a clear and comprehensive order was not given by Hitler and Himmler. Browning wrote:

The claim that Himmler issued an all-encompassing killing order in front of the murder scene near Minsk is primarily based on self-serving postwar statements by his officers and on the mistaken assumption that Berlin agencies had to be the centers of decision making in regard to the carrying out of the mass murder in the east. . . . With the delegation of power to his commanding officers, it was not Himmler but the HSSPF, the leaders of the Einsatzgruppen, Kommandostab units, and police battalions who, in conjunction with the military and representatives of the emerging civil administration, decided on matters of practical policy.⁶

Gerlach related to the subject whether Himmler issued an order for a undifferentiated killing of all the Jews during his visit in Minsk. He wrote, "Himmler had actually given orders for the expansion of the liquidation campaign to the First ss Infantry Brigade three days before, in a personal meeting with the HSSPF Russland-Süd, Jeckeln. These orders were probably intended for broader implementation"⁷

Dr. Filbert, commander of Einsatzkommando 9, in a speech to his subordinates at the end of July, in the town of Vileika in west Belorussia, said, "It will also be necessary from now on to shoot also Jewish women and children."⁸ EK 9, before its arrival in Vileika, operated from July 2 until July 20 in Vilnius, where they killed about 5,000 Jewish males.⁹ This change in the EK 9 mission was not Filbert's personal decision, but either it was signaled to him or ordered by the command of EG B at the end of July, and they also received such orders or signals from higher authorities.¹⁰

In EG C were similar developments. According to the testimony of Erwin Schulz, commander of EK 5, while he was in Berdichev, he was summoned by

Otto Rasch, commander of EG C to come and meet him in Zhitomir. It happened in early August 1941. Rasch informed him that the superior authorities were displeased that the SS formations and the police were not acting aggressively enough against the Jews, especially by not killing women and children. On August 12, when HSSPF South Jeckeln met Himmler, he was also urged to act more aggressively.¹¹ The very fact that in AG B and AG C, both commanders of these units transferred to their subordinate commanders the need to include women and children in mass extermination actions confirms that it was not their initiative but directives from their superiors, Himmler and Heydrich.

In conclusion, no comprehensive written order, addressed to the three HSSPF (North, Center, South) and to the Einsatzgruppen and police battalions, for extermination of all the Jews, including women and children, was issued by Himmler during his August 14–15, 1941, visit in Minsk or earlier. But factually and based on the testimonies of EK commanders Brandisch, Filbert, and Schulz, the mass murders of women and children had already in late July or early August 1941, in the area of the Pripet marshes, where by Himmler's order Jewish women and children were sent into the marshes to die. It lasted for months, because not everywhere were SS forces available to carry out the murders, and some places with large Jewish communities were occupied by the German army only in the months of September and October 1941 (Kiev, September 19, Odessa, October 16, and Kharkov, October 25).

Himmler's tour of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, on July 23 in Lvov (Ukraine), on July 29–31 in Ostland (Kaunas, Riga, Baranovichi), on August 12 in a meeting with Jeckeln, and in mid-August in Minsk,¹² was a determining factor in the annihilation process change, from the murder of Jewish males to the undifferentiated murder of all Jews. It happened not by one general order issued by Himmler but by verbal statements and discussions he had with the HSSPF—North, Prutzmann, HSSPF-South, Jeckeln, HSSPF-Center, Bach-Zelewski, with Einsatzgruppen commanders and with commanders of units subordinated his Kommandostab during his tour. In these meetings Himmler spoke about the need of an intensification of the killings of Jews, including women and children. Whether it was given as a direct clear order, as Brandisch claimed, or he spoke in more general terms is not important. The subordinate HSSPF and EG commanders understood it as an order, or at least as an intention of the high authorities in Berlin, and willingly acted accordingly, because it was also their point of view. The practical decisions, when and where to do it, on which scale, whether to leave some working Jews and their families, was left to the local SS command, in cooperation and coordination with the military and civilian administration.

Recent research by several German historians, including Christian Gerlach

and Christoph Dieckmann, relates the late July or August 1941 decision to exterminate all Jews mainly to difficulties involved in supplying food to the German forces in the Soviet Union, food which had to be obtained from local sources. Dieckmann relates the murder of the overwhelming majority of the Jews in the Baltic states before the end of 1941 to the food supply crisis for Army Group North. The plan to supply this army group from local sources failed. On the wake of the food crisis, the Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost, which was responsible for the overall economic policy in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, informed the German civil administration that the provisions for Wehrmacht had absolute priority over the needs of the local population. By exterminating the Jews, the number of mouths requiring food would be reduced. The civil administration, for political and economic reasons (the need of people to work), and in order not to raise opposition and cause security problems in the rear areas of the army, could not starve the indigenous population there. At least a part of the local food sources had to be allotted to them. The Jews and the Soviet prisoners of war were the immediate victims of this food crisis. All of them, except the few who were needed for urgent work, were therefore doomed to die.¹³

“Anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism,” wrote Gerlach, “were necessary preconditions for these murders . . . but only economic pressure led to the massive killing campaigns, to the horrible dynamic of mass murder.”¹⁴ To the concept of murdering Jews because of the need for food, Dieckmann added the considerations of security in the German rear army areas: “Food and security policy appear thereby to have been the two crucial aspects which led to a radicalization of anti-Jewish policy and made the decisive changes and transitions possible.”¹⁵

It is hard to accept the security rationalization, since the Germans could have “made do” with murdering only Jewish men. Jewish women, children, and old people were no danger to the German army in the rear areas. The security rationalization served as an excuse for the murder actions but was groundless in reality. As for the economic allegations, the extermination of Jews would indeed have reduced the number of mouths requiring food, but this was hardly the main factor in deciding on their total annihilation. The main factor was actually based on Nazi racial policies and the fact that the Germans considered the entire Jewish population in the Soviet Union to be flag bearers of communist ideology. Relating the mass murders mainly on racial ideology is reinforced by the very fact that as the annihilation of the Soviet Jews was under way, plans were being made to exterminate all the Jews of Europe—and in Europe, after all, there was no need to feed the German army on the eastern front, nor was there a security problem in the rear army. Here it was only a case of Nazi racist policy.

Goebbels, following his August 19, 1941, meeting with Hitler, noted in his

diary that the extermination of Jews had begun in the occupied Soviet territories. “We also spoke about the Jewish problem. The Führer is of the conviction that his earlier prophesy in the Reichstag, that if the Jews succeeded in provoking a world war once again, it would end with the extermination of the Jews—was coming true. In these weeks and months, it has proven accurate with an uncanny certainty. In the east, the Jews have to pay the price.”¹⁶

METHODS OF EXTERMINATION

The methods used by the Einsatzgruppen in their murder actions were similar in all the regions in which they operated. After entering newly occupied towns the Einsatzgruppen set about carrying out the systematic and planned murder of Jews. In the more central towns, where the Einsatzkommando stayed for periods of time, and in places where, with the establishment of civil government, they turned into local permanent Sipo stations, they carried out there the extermination actions. In certain towns, thousands of Jews were murdered in one action that lasted between one and three days. In this way, the Jewish communities in Kiev, Kharkov, Vitebsk, and many other localities were annihilated. In other towns, such as Minsk, Vilnius, Pinsk, and Lvov, the murder of Jews was carried out over several actions, with interruptions between each one. In townships and rural areas, the extermination was carried out by small, mobile Einsatzgruppen units who came to the area and, helped by the local police, murdered all the Jews in one blow before moving elsewhere to carry out another action.

The Einsatzgruppen needed the help of local governing bodies in carrying out their murderous acts, whether these were under the authority of regional Feldkommandantur or Ortskommandantur in the areas of military administration, or of the Gebietskommissar in areas under civil administration. In the small townships or rural areas where there were no German governing bodies, the Einsatzgruppen were helped by local municipal authorities—mayors and village elders (*soltys*). In carrying out extermination actions, the Einsatzgruppen had full freedom of action, according to Directive no. 21 of March 13, 1941, and the Heydrich-Wagner agreement. The Einsatzgruppen needed the cooperation of local authorities in order to receive information on numbers and locations of the Jews, to select places in which to concentrate the Jews and places suitable to carry out the murder and bury them. The murders usually took place in natural ravines or in antitank trenches prepared, as part of defense lines, by the Red Army. In place where no ravines or trenches were available, special pits were dug prior to the extermination acts—usually by local peasants as part of their compulsory work quota or by Soviet prisoners of war from the camps in the region. In some

acts of extermination, especially the smaller ones, the Jews were ordered to dig the pits in which they would subsequently be buried.

In the areas of military government, orders were usually issued by the Feldkommandanturen or Ortskommandanturen for Jews to concentrate at predestined meeting places. In areas of civil government, the orders were issued by the Gebietskommissars or by the local police (Orpo), or by Sipo. In cities in which ghettos had not been established, and whose Jewish population was living in various places, orders were posted on billboards calling for Jews to assemble in meeting points, specifying the time and sometimes even the purpose of the gathering. In most cases, this was referred to as “resettlement elsewhere,” “resettlement in a ghetto,” “resettlement in a sparsely populated location,” etc. In towns that already had ghettos and Jewish councils, orders were usually passed on by the latter, and there was no need for a meeting point; the ghetto, or some place inside the ghetto, served this purpose. In areas where townships were located close to each other and in rural areas, the Einsatzgruppen would often concentrate the Jews in one place and take them from there to the pits, next to which they were shot. Several kilometers usually separated the urban meeting points from the sites of the murder pits, which were located on the edges of towns or well away from them. Transportation from the points of concentration to the sites of the murders was carried out in groups of several hundred people, usually on foot. Those who were unable to walk—the old, infirm, and handicapped—were transported by cars usually supplied by local municipal bodies and sometimes by the German army. Sometimes they were shot on the spot.

The Einsatzgruppen were small in number, and in their extermination operations they were helped by additional forces: in securing the people in ghettos and transporting them to the murder pits, they were assisted by German ORPO and by the local police; they were also helped by these in securing the areas in which murders took place and in preventing Jews from getting away. These ORPO forces were under orders from Himmler to follow the requests of the Einsatzgruppen and to help them carry out their missions.¹⁷

In order to assist the Einsatzgruppen and to facilitate their swift advance eastward, Heydrich directed the Sipo commanders in east Prussia and in the General Government to organize mobile units from among the forces under their command and to dispatch them to the occupied Soviet areas close to their borders. Such forces were sent from Tilsit in east Prussia to Lithuania, and in mid-July the Sipo commander in the General Government sent three such units to Lvov, Brest-Litovsk, and Bialystok. These improvised units joined in the mass murder of Jews.¹⁸ In carrying out their missions, the Einsatzgruppen were also assisted by military units.¹⁹ The shootings were carried out by members of the

Einsatzgruppen and special units of local volunteers. Karl Jäger, who commanded Einsatzkommando 3, formed a mobile killing unit of eight to ten men who carried out the mass murder of Jews in the countryside throughout Lithuania. As he wrote in his report:

The execution of such *Aktionen* is first of all an organizational problem. The decision to clear each subdistrict systematically of Jews required a thorough preparation of each *Aktion* and the study of local conditions. The Jews had to be concentrated in one or more localities and in accordance with their numbers, a site had to be selected and pits dug. The marching distance from the concentration points to the pits averaged 4 to 5 kilometers. The Jews were brought to the place of execution (*Exekutionsplatz*), in groups of 500, with about 2 kilometers distance between groups. The hardships and nerve-racking that we had to suffer in carrying out this work is illustrated in this example that I have chosen at random: In Rokishkis, there was a need to transfer 3,208 people and it was 4.5 kilometers to their place of execution. In order to carry out this operation within 24 hours, it was necessary to allocate 60 out of the 80 Lithuanian partisans at our disposal, for transportation, and especially guard duties. The remaining . . . did the work [shooting] with my people. . . . The distance we had to cover from one locality we acted to another was around 160–200 kilometers. Only the efficient use of our schedule made it possible to carry out five actions a week.²⁰

This method of operation was also typical of other Einsatzgruppen. Murder operations were carried out openly in sight of German soldiers, as well as the inquisitive local population. According to Andreas Eberl, a German soldier who served in July 1941 in the Latvian town of Daugavpils:

We heard that they were executing Jews in the prison. . . . We went to watch. The executions didn't take place inside the prison but nearby. . . . The trenches were two and a half meters wide and 40 to 50 long. I couldn't work out the depth of the trench, since it contained the bodies of hundreds of Jews who had been shot earlier. The condemned were forced to kneel on their knees on a dirt bank, with their faces toward the trench. The commandos shot [them] in the back of the neck. The distance between the shooter and the person being shot was about half a meter. . . . After being shot the people fell off the bank and into the trench. The commando unit consisted of ten men, half of them shot, while the other half stood behind them and changed places from time to time. Inside the pit, I could see a man of about sixty, obviously a Jew, whose job it was to arrange the bodies in rows. When a row of corpses was completed, the man climbed out of the pit and sprinkled white stuff, prob-

ably chlorine, over the corpses. For about an hour, I watched the executions along with my friends. During that time, some 150 Jews were shot. . . . The number of soldiers watching was about 60 to 80. The Jews who were shot and fell into the pit and continued to move were shot with a submachine gun by one of the commandos. Ammunition for recharging the weapons was laid on a table alongside some bottles of vodka, and from time to time, one of the commandos would come up and take a sip from the bottle.²¹

Maj. Karl Roesler, commander of the 528 Infantry battalion, which arrived in Zhitomir (Ukraine) in July 1941, witnessed the execution of Jews. In his report to Gen. Rudolf Schniewindt, he wrote:

We could hear from a short distance away regular bursts of rifle fire. . . . We saw large numbers of soldiers as well as civilians running in the direction of the railway bank. . . . When we climbed up on the bank, the picture that revealed itself was terrible in its cruelty. . . . The trench was filled with the bodies of men and women. . . . Large numbers of soldiers from army units in the region were standing at a distance and watching, some of them were even dressed in gym shorts. Among the spectators there were many civilians, including women and children. . . . I am convinced that in terms of our current educational and moral concepts, there is no room for mass executions in so public and open a manner.²²

It must be stressed that Major Roesler did not object to the murder of these people, only to the open and public way in which it was carried out. Many German soldiers and local civilians openly viewed the mass executions of Jews.²³ Albert Bronowski, manager of the Rumbuli railway station near Riga, witnessed the murder of thousands of Jews:

The executions began on the morning of November 30. . . . The people were naked, except for a shirt and underpants and carrying their children in their arms. . . . German soldiers stood next to the trench, and next to them were boxes into which the people were to place the last objects of value that they had with them, watches, rings, necklaces. From the trench came the incessant sound of gunfire and rounds from automatic weapons. The few who tried to burst through the guards in order to save their lives were shot by the soldiers on guard.²⁴

The Wehrmacht soldiers on active duty in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union were well aware of the mass murder of Jews being perpetrated in the region. In some places, the soldiers joined the Einsatzgruppen on their own initiative in executing the Jews. In various places, complaints and reports were sent to the

higher echelons of the army about the openness of the executions, including fears that they might be a threat to the morale of the troops who had to witness them.²⁵ General Karl Rundstedt, commander of Army Group South, issued a directive to the troops on September 24, in which he said, “Independent operations on the part of army units must be stopped . . . as must be [stopped] the viewing or photographing of operations carried out by the Sonderkommandos.”²⁶

Even where the murder operations took place at a distance from towns or villages, they were no secret to the millions of soldiers who fought on Germany’s eastern front and the tens of millions of civilians who inhabited the region. The Einsatzgruppen and other killing units operating in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union did very little to conceal the extermination operations from the local civilian population. However, they did everything possible to hide the truth from the Jews—the objects of the murder—and to deceive with regard to the fate that awaited them.

The ss chiefs were concerned by the drawbacks in the almost public, execution-by-shooting methods used by the Einsatzgruppen, such as the necessity to shoot and hit each and every one of thousands of people, which was time-consuming and required large quantities of troops to secure and carry out the operation. Moreover, the constant strain of daily murders was having a negative psychological effect on some of the perpetrators. During a visit to Minsk on August 15–16, 1941, Himmler, accompanied by HSSPF of Army Group Center von dem Bach-Zelewski and Commander of EG B Arthur Nebe, watched an extermination operation:

As the firing started, Himmler was even more nervous. During every volley, he looked to the ground. . . . Von dem Bach addressed Himmler: “Reichsführer, those were only 100. . . . Look at the eyes of the men in this Kommando, how deeply shaken they are! Those men are finished [*fertig*] for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!”²⁷

During the visit in Minsk, Himmler asked Nebe to “adopt his thoughts,” and ordered that a more “humane” method of execution be found.²⁸ Before being appointed commander of Einsatzgruppe B, Nebe had been in charge of Kripo in the RSHA, he had been party to the secret Operation Euthanasia, and he was familiar with its gas method of putting human beings to death.²⁹ When Einsatzgruppe B was about to exterminate mental patients in Minsk and Mogilev, Nebe decided to try carbon monoxide rather than mass shooting. Already in January 1940, in the Warthegau (west occupied Poland), mental patients were put inside a sealed truck in which bottled carbon monoxide was introduced. After a short drive the poisoned victims were taken to a nearby forest and buried. Nebe

contacted the Kripo command and asked for help in murdering mental patients through the use of poison gas.³⁰ The Kripo sent him Dr. Albert Widmann, a chemist employed at their institute of technology. An experimental murder of 20–30 mental patients was carried out in Mogilev. They were locked in a sealed room into which carbon monoxide gas was pumped from car exhausts. Widmann described the experiment he and Nebe carried out in a mental institution:

Nebe ordered the window bricked in, leaving two openings for the gas hose. . . . When we arrived, one of the hoses I had brought was connected. It was fixed onto the exhaust of a reconnaissance car. Pieces of piping stuck out of the holes made in the wall, onto which the hose could easily be fitted. . . . After five minutes, Nebe came out and said that nothing appeared to have happened. . . . Nebe and I reached the conclusion that the car's engine wasn't strong enough. So Nebe had the second hose fitted onto a truck belonging to the Orpo. It then took only another few minutes before the people were unconscious.³¹

Widmann and Nebe reported on the results of the experiment at Mogilev to Heydrich and their superiors at the RSHA.³² As a result of this experiment and technical experiments carried out in Berlin, the RSHA embarked on the development of a mobile gas truck, similar to an ambulance, with a hermetically sealed passenger section. Carbon dioxide was pumped out of the exhaust pipe through a pipe connected to the passenger section into which the condemned were loaded. Two types of gas vans were constructed by the RSHA's technical department under the command of Obersturmbanführer Walter Rauff. One was a larger Saurer that could accommodate 50 to 60 people. The other was a smaller truck, a Diamond, that could hold 25–30 passengers. The first experiment in a gas truck was carried out in the autumn of 1941 at the Sachsenhausen camp in Germany. The guinea pigs for this experiment were some 30 Soviet prisoners of war. After a thirty-minute drive, the door of the passenger section was opened to reveal that all the people in side had died of gas inhalation.³³

The first gas vans were sent to Riga during the second half of December 1941 and placed at the disposal of the Sipo commander in Ostland. Gas vans were also used by the Einsatzgruppen in Reichskommissariat Ukraine and regions of military administration. Gas vans were operated in the Chelmno concentration camp and in Yugoslavia.³⁴

Technical failures were discovered in gas vans being used in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union; weather conditions, the state of the roads, and personal circumstances also caused problems in operating the trucks. Untersturmführer Dr. August Becker, who was responsible for operating the gas vans, examined the matter in the Ukraine in spring 1942 and reported:

The examination of trucks in Einsatzgruppen C and D is completed. . . . The uneven surfaces and road conditions are causing the nails [to] come loose from the seals and joints. . . . The process is not being carried out correctly and death is not caused by gas inhalation. In order to complete the operation as quickly as possible, the drivers are releasing the maximum quantity of gas. Thus the condemned are dying of suffocation and not in their sleep, as was decided. As a result of my modifications, it was found that by turning the handle in the right direction [the stabilizing handle], death takes place more quickly and the prisoners fall asleep in peace.³⁵

The number of gas vans in operation in the occupied Soviet territories was too small to meet the needs, so they were used in the execution of groups of prison inmates or in actions where the number of victims was only a few hundred. In large actions, the trucks served in an auxiliary capacity only.

The issue of killing by gas was placed on the agenda of the civil administration. In a secret letter, dated October 25, 1941, Dr. Ernst Wetzel of the Ministry of the Eastern Occupied Territories told Lohse: "I must inform you that Oberdienstleiter Victor Brack, from the Führer's chancellery, has agreed to cooperate in establishing the necessary buildings and instruments for using gas. . . . In the current situation, we must not doubt the advantages of using Brack's installations in exterminating Jews who are unsuited for work."³⁶

The proposal to erect permanent gas installations was connected to the preparations to deport thousands of Jews from the Reich to Ostland, which had begun several weeks after this letter was sent. Permanent gas installations, as Wetzel suggested to Lohse, were not erected in Ostland. Apparently Lohse was not interested, and the Berlin office did not press the issue. Shootings continued to be the main means of exterminating Jews in the occupied Soviet territories.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CARRYING OUT THE FINAL SOLUTION

From late 1941 to early 1942, policies changed regarding the final solution of the Jewish problem in Europe and the ways in which it was implemented. On December 11, 1941, Germany declared war on the United States, and thus the war became a world war. Now that it was no longer concerned about U.S. public opinion, Germany was free to take its anti-Jewish policies to new extremes and start the total annihilation of European Jewry—a policy that had hereto been applied only toward the Jews of the Soviet Union.³⁷

The Wannsee Conference was convened on January 20, 1942, in a Berlin suburb. Heydrich was conference chairman, and representatives of the Reich

ministries, including representatives of the Ministry of the Eastern Occupied Territories and of German government bodies in the occupied territories, took part. The conference was convened in order to convey Hitler's decision on the final solution, on ways of carrying it out, and on the fact that responsibility for implementing this decision was being entrusted to Himmler and Heydrich. The conference delegates were informed unequivocally that the final solution was to be extended to all the countries in Europe and to more than 11 million Jews living in them.³⁸

As far as the Soviet Jews were concerned, the decisions of the Wannsee Conference were of no importance, since the final solution had already begun. This was mentioned indirectly in the conference minutes, according to which there were no longer any Jews in Estonia; only 3,500 Jews remained in Latvia, and there were now 34,000 Jews still alive in Lithuania. The 5 million Soviet Jews mentioned in the minutes, a number which was included in the 11 million destined for annihilation, was exaggerated. This number did not include the Jews of Bessarabia or the Bialystok region; the Jews of the Baltic states were counted separately. Moreover, the hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Ukraine and Belorussia, who by the end of 1941 had already been murdered, were not deducted from this number.

The most significant development in the final solution took place with the construction of the extermination camps. On September 3, 1941, the Auschwitz extermination camp began experimenting with Zyklon-B gas. Following this experiment, the Nazis started building gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz 2), and in March 1942 transports of Jews began arriving in Auschwitz from various European countries. The extermination camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka were established in the framework of Operation Reinhard—the annihilation of Jews of the General Government, including the Jews in east Galicia.

II

Reichskommissariat Ostland Ghettos and Extermination

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LITHUANIA

The arrival in Lithuania of the Einsatzgruppen, after the wave of anti-Semitic pogroms during the first days of the war, signaled the onset of full-scale extermination of the Jews there. During the first months of occupation, three Einsatzkommando units operated in Lithuania. Einsatzkommando 3 operated in the Kaunas region and central and western Lithuania; subunits of Einsatzkommando 2 operated in the region of Schauliai and northern Lithuania; and Einsatzkommando 9 operated in the Vilnius area. Also, a special Sipo unit from Tilsit in east Prussia carried out murder actions along the border region inside Lithuania. Einsatzkommando 3 gradually took control of other parts of Generalkommissariat Lithuania: the Vilnius region on August 9 and the Shauliai area on October 2.

The Einsatzgruppen had absolute freedom to conduct their murderous operations, and the extent and schedule of these were governed by the EG's physical ability. In Lithuania and Latvia the Einsatzkommandos were assisted from the very beginning by local police and volunteers. On October 15, 1941, Franz Stahlecker wrote, "Large-scale executions were carried out in the cities and countryside by Sonderkommandos which were assisted by selected units—partisan groups in Lithuania, and parties of Latvian auxiliary police in Latvia."¹ Karl Jäger, commander of Einsatzkommando 3, testified at his trial:

On arriving in Kaunas I found there the Lithuanian police, whose existence was authorized by the German authorities. Commander of the Lithuanian Sipo was [Stasis] Cenkus. Also there was what they called an Erschiessungskommando, or shooting unit, consisting of 50–100 Lithuanians, under the command of the Lithuanian Lieutenant [Bronius] Norkus. He and his unit were under the command of [Obersturmführer Joachim] Hamann, together with whom they carried out shooting [operations] against the Jews.²

A separate Lithuanian murder unit was established in Vilnius and given the name “Ypatingas Burys,” or “special unit,” and placed under the command of the Einsatzkommando operating there.

Most of the victims in Lithuania during the first weeks of occupation were Jewish men. Between July 4 and August 15, Einsatzkommando 3 murdered 8,277 Jewish men and 740 Jewish women. In Vilnius, Einsatzkommando 9 murdered some 5,000 Jewish men during July. By mid-July, the subunit of Einsatzkommando 2 had murdered about 1,000 Jewish men in Shauliai.³

Most of the Jewish men murdered during these months had been kidnapped in the streets and their homes arbitrarily and taken off to be exterminated; only a few were known to the Lithuanians as communists and Soviet functionaries. According to an eyewitness in Vilnius, “The Gestapo drive up to Jewish houses and kidnap the men. The people are supposedly being taken to work for a few days, but they never return.”⁴ The murder was carried out in Panerai (Ponary), a forested area some 12 kilometers away from the city.

In late June and early July, some 10,000 men, women, and children were arrested in Kaunas—one-quarter of the city’s Jews. They were led to Seventh Fort, one of the strongholds surrounding Kaunas, where the men were separated from the women and children. Thousands of men were shot to death on July 6; on July 8 the women and children were taken to Ninth Fort, where they were released. In his report, Jäger pointed out that 2,930 Jewish men and 47 Jewish women were murdered at Seventh Fort between July 4 and July 6, 1941.⁵

In the large Jewish communities of Kaunas and Vilnius, the murders were carried out by members of the Sipo, who were stationed there. Most of the forces at their disposal consisted of Lithuanian Schutzmannschaften, under the command of the German Orpo, and in the Vilnius region, the Ypatingas Burys were commanded by Sipo. In smaller towns and townships, a mobile Sipo unit, under the command of Obersturmführer Hamann, was employed, helped in all instances by local Lithuanian police and volunteers. The smaller Jewish communities were exterminated in a single action; while two or three separate actions were required to annihilate the larger communities. In his report, Karl Jäger wrote, “The goal of clearing Lithuania of Jews could only be achieved through the establishment of a specially mobile unit, under the command of ss Obersturmführer Hamann who . . . was also able to ensure the cooperation of the Lithuanian partisans and the relevant civil authorities.”⁶

In this way, most of Lithuania’s small and medium-sized Jewish communities, ranging in number from several hundred to several thousand people, were wiped out. Simultaneously with the mass murder, the German authorities began establishing ghettos in the larger towns.

The Jews of Panevezys were ghettoized on July 11, and other Jews were brought in from neighboring townships. The ghetto existed for less than six weeks. In the course of several actions between late July and mid-August 1941, over 1,200 people were murdered, most of them men, and the remaining inhabitants—7,523—of whom, according to German reports, 1,312 were men, 4,602 were women, and 1,609 were children—were murdered on August 23, 1941.⁷ Altogether, 8,744 Jews were murdered in Panevezys.

Similar methods to those used in Panevezys were also employed in exterminating other Jewish communities throughout Lithuania. Ghettos would be established in large communities in certain regions, and other Jews would be brought in from neighboring townships. In the first stage young Jewish men would be rounded up and taken away to an unknown location—supposedly to work—and murdered. The final stage consisted of murdering the ghetto's remaining inhabitants, most of whom were women, children, and the elderly.

Kaunas was the first occupied Soviet city in which an order was issued by the Germans to establish a ghetto. On July 8, 1941, some former Jewish community leaders were instructed to report to Stahlecker, who was staying in the city at the time. Stahlecker informed them that until August 15 the Jews had to move into a ghetto in the Slobodka (Williampola) quarter. The excuse for this move was that the local Lithuanians were now refusing to live alongside Jews, whom they saw as communists. The protests of the Jewish leaders that the Jews were not to be associated with communists and that it would be impossible to house all the Jews of Kaunas in the small Slobodka quarter proved futile. The Jewish representatives were required to return to Jäger the following day and agree to cooperate in carrying out the ghettoization.⁸

In an attempt to prevent the establishment of a ghetto, the Jewish leaders approached the city's Lithuanian military commander, Colonel Jurgis Bubeilis, Archbishop Vincentas Brizgys, and Yonas Matuliunas, a member of the Lithuanian provisional government. But their efforts failed. On July 9, the Jewish representatives informed Jäger that, having no choice, they were accepting his order concerning a ghetto. Jäger charged the five-man Jewish delegation with the responsibility for transferring the Jews to the ghetto and informed them that all liaisons would be conducted in accordance with orders issued by the city's Lithuanian military commander and mayor.⁹

The following day, on July 10, announcements were posted over the city concerning the removal of the Jewish population to the ghetto by August 15; anyone not complying with the order would be arrested. The announcements also informed the quarter's non-Jewish residents that they were to be relocated.¹⁰ An eyewitness described those days in Kaunas:

From then on, the house doorkeepers, neighbors, and just ordinary Lithuanians were able, “in the name of the law,” to persecute the Jews. . . . Hundreds of Lithuanians would literally throw Jewish inhabitants out on the street and take up residence in the “vacated” property. Anyone who went to complain to the authorities did not return.¹¹

In the hope that living in the ghetto would save them from the persecutions and murder, the Jews were quick to move soon after publication of the decree. On August 15, 1941, the Jews of Kaunas were enclosed in the ghetto and governed by a Jewish council, established on August 5 and headed by Dr. Elhanan Elkes. The Kaunas Ghetto consisted of two parts—the “large ghetto” and the “small ghetto,” joined to each other by a pedestrian bridge. The ghetto was fenced in with barbed wire and guarded by the Lithuanian police.¹²

On August 14, the day before the ghetto gates were closed, the Jewish council was required to recruit educated people for archival work. Professionals responding to the Jewish council’s call were taken to Seventh Fort and murdered.¹³ According to the Jäger report, on August 18 “698 Jews, 402 Jewesses, 1 Pole, 711 Jewish people of intelligence from the ghetto [were murdered] in reaction to an act of sabotage.”¹⁴ A total of 29,760 Jews were placed in the ghetto.¹⁵ In the course of two actions, one on September 26 and the other on October 4, some 3,500 Jewish men, women, and children were removed from the ghetto to Ninth Fort and murdered. The small ghetto was emptied of its inhabitants.¹⁶

On October 27 a notice was posted in the ghetto on behalf of the German authorities, ordering all the ghetto’s inhabitants to show up at 6:00 the following morning in “Democracy Square,” which was inside the ghetto. Anyone remaining in the apartments would be shot. In the square the people were arranged according to their working places and ordered to parade past Helmut Rauke, the Sipo officer in charge of the ghetto, who determined who was fit for work and who was not. Those fit for work were sent, with their families, to the left. The others were sent to the right. The 9,200 people on the right were then placed in the unoccupied small ghetto. The following morning they were taken to Ninth Fort and murdered. This operation was given the name “Large Action.”¹⁷ Kaunas Police Battalion no. 1, under the command of Colonel Andreas Butkumas, was the main Lithuanian force that carried out the exterminations in Kaunas. Some 17,400 Jews remained in the ghetto.¹⁸

August was a relatively quiet month for the Jews of Vilnius. Although the kidnappings and murders continued, they were on a smaller scale than those of the previous month.¹⁹ On September 1, an announcement was published, signed by Gebietskommissar Hans Hingst, which said: “Yesterday, Sunday afternoon, shots

were fired in Vilnius from an ambush at German soldiers. Two of these coward bandits were identified, they were Jews. . . . Responsibility falls on the entire Jewish community.”²⁰ The few shots fired at German soldiers was a provocation organized by the German administration. None of the soldiers had been hurt by these shots, but by the night of August 31 and on September 1 and 2, all the Jews residing in the quarter from which the shots were fired were taken away to Panerai, where they were shot beside pits.²¹

According to the Jäger Report, “864 Jews, 2,019 Jewesses, and 817 Jewish children—a total of 3,700 people—were shot on September 2, 1941.”²² According to Jewish sources, the number murdered was around 5,000. Among the murdered were the members of the Jewish council, and the Jews of Vilnius remained without a leadership. The Jews coined this action “the Big Provocation.”²³ This murder action served a double purpose—first, the murder of Jews; second, their removal from an area in which the German administration planned and established two ghettos.

Forty-six thousand Jews from Vilnius were forced into the two ghettos on September 6 and 7. The city was divided into three parts: the area from where 29,000–30,000 Jews were moved to the larger of the two ghettos (ghetto no. 1); the area from which 9,000–11,000 Jews were moved to Ghetto no. 2; and the area from which some 6,000 Jews were sent to the Lukishki city prison.²⁴ Expulsion of the Jews was carried out by Lithuanian police, under the command of Antanas Iskauskas, who reported on September 9, 1941: “The ghetto operation began at 6 a.m. . . . To prevent the escape of the Jews, guards were placed on all the roads going out of the town. . . . The action was carried out by the police and soldiers from the [Lithuanian] self-defense units.”²⁵

The Jews were allowed to take only what they could carry with them. The city’s non-Jewish population lined the roads and watched the expulsion, some with sympathy for the Jews, others to gloat. The Jews who were taken to Lukishki prison were held there for several days and then taken to Panerai and shot. In his report, Jäger pointed out that on September 12, 3,334 Jews were shot in Vilnius.²⁶

The closing of the Vilnius Jews into the ghetto was carried out while no Jewish council existed. So, after entering the ghetto, there was chaos. There was no one there to direct people into the vacated apartments, and these were filled by the first to arrive. Many families were obliged to take up residence in attics, cellars, staircases, and yards. On September 8, the Germans appointed Jewish councils for the two ghettos, and these, with the help of the newly established Jewish police, settled the most acute and immediate problem of accommodation.²⁷

The murder of the Jewish council members and not using its help in organizing the transfer of the Jews into the ghetto were unusual. But it proved that

the Germans did not really need the help of Jewish councils in ghettoizing and exterminating the Jews. The Jews, when closed in a ghetto, needed a Jewish authority to organize life in the cramped area.

The German authorities in Vilnius decided that ghetto no. 1 would house those Jews and their families who were employed by the German institutions, while all the other Jews would be concentrated in ghetto no. 2. On the Day of Atonement (October 1, 1941), when most Jews were in the synagogues, Germans and Lithuanians burst into ghetto no. 2 and arrested between 3,000 and 3,500 Jews, including holders of *Scheinen* (work licenses issued by the German authorities). The Jews were led to Panerai and shot there. The Day of Atonement action was not mentioned in the Jäger Report. In three successive actions on October 3–4, 15–16, and 21, the Germans liquidated ghetto no. 2 after murdering its 6,500 to 7,500 inhabitants.²⁸

In mid-October, the Gebietskommissariat labor exchange cancelled all the *Scheinen* issued by the various German and Lithuanian authorities and issued a single uniform *Schein* that became known as the “yellow *Schein*.” The authorities handed out 3,400 of these *Scheinen*, each of which granted immunity to its holder, his spouse, and two children up to the age of 16. According to this new ruling, no more than 13,000 people were to remain in the ghetto. The ghetto’s population at that time numbered between 27,000 and 28,000 Jews, of whom 14,000 to 15,000 were doomed to die. In order to make themselves eligible for a *Schein*, people began forming fictitious families on their own initiative or as encouraged by the Jewish council. They also began preparing hiding places.

Two major murder actions took place in the ghetto, following the issue of yellow *Scheinen*—the first on October 24, the second on November 3–5, followed by a few smaller actions in December 1941, in which close to 7,000 Jews were captured and murdered. Notwithstanding the careful searches, 7,000 “illegal” Jews managed to hide and remain in the ghetto.²⁹ Altogether, some 20,000 Jews remained in the Vilnius ghetto. The main force in the murder actions in Vilnius was the Lithuanian–Vilnius Number 2 Police Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Yonas Yoknevičius.³⁰

In the Shauliai area and in regions of northern Lithuania, a subunit of Einsatzkommando 2 carried out its murder of Jews between July and September 1941. During the second half of August, the Jews of Shauliai, 5,000 to 5,500 in number, were transferred to the ghetto. Prior to the transfer, some 2,000 of Shauliai’s Jews were murdered. Apart from the Shauliai murders, the extermination of Jews was conducted by a subunit of Einsatzkommando 2 in the Birzai, Mazeikiai, and Telsiai regions.³¹

Along the border between Lithuania and east Prussia, a 25-kilometer strip of

land within Lithuania, the murder of Jews was conducted by a special Sipo unit from Tilsit, in coordination with Stahlecker, commander of Einsatzgruppe A.³² It started with the murder of 200 Jews in the small border town of Garzdai, as a punishment for the obstinate resistance of the Soviet frontier troops who inflicted losses on the attacking German infantry.³³ The Tilsit unit operated over an area stretching from Taurage, via Jurbarkas and up to Vilkaviskis, and the local Jews were murdered during the first months of German occupation.³⁴

The mass murder of the Jews in Lithuania lasted until December 1941. According to Jäger, in the December 1, 1941, report summing up the activity of Einsatzkommando 3:

I can confirm today that Einsatzkommando 3 has achieved the goal of solving the Jewish problem in Lithuania. There are no more Jews in Lithuania, apart from the working Jews and their families. And these are: in Shauliai, some 4,500; in Kaunas, some 15,000; in Vilnius, some 15,000.³⁵

The number of Jews remaining in the ghettos was greater than that quoted by Jäger, since a significant number were in hiding at the time of the murder actions. There were some 20,000 Jews in Vilnius and 17,500 Jews in Kaunas. In Shauliai the number was between 5,000 and 5,500, and in the Svencionys ghetto, which was not mentioned in the report, there remained some 500 Jews. Assuming that hundreds of Jews were in hiding in various places in Lithuania, there remained between 43,000 and 44,000 Jews in Lithuania.

Between 203,000 and 207,000 Jews remained under German occupation in Generalkommissariat Lithuania—of whom 136,000–138,000 were in ethnic Lithuania, and there were 67,000–69,000 Jews in the Vilnius area annexed to Lithuania. According to these statistics, between 160,000 and 163,000 Jews were murdered there by the end of 1941.

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LATVIA

Einsatzkommando 2 arrived in Latvia with some of its subunits in early July 1941. At the same time, the Latvian police force was getting organized. According to the Einsatzgruppen report on events in Riga: “The security of the city has been organized with the help of Hilfspolizei (400 men). . . . In addition to these Hilfspolizei troops, two further independent units have been established for the purpose of carrying out pogroms. All synagogues have been destroyed: up to now 400 Jews have been liquidated.”³⁶ One of the independent units mentioned in the report was under the command of Victor Arajs and known as Sonderkommando Arajs. It came under the command of Einsatzkommando

2. This unit and the other *Schutz Männer* were those that annihilated most of the Jews of Latvia.

In Riga, thousands of Jewish men were snatched off the streets and out of their homes; they were taken in groups to the nearby Bikernieki forest and shot. By the end of July 1941, some 4,700 men had been murdered. In July the Latvians, encouraged by the Einsatzgruppen, had razed most of the city's synagogues to the ground.³⁷ In his October 20, 1941, report to Reichskommissar Lohse, the Generalkommissar of Latvia included the matter of establishing ghettos and pointed out that "a genuine Jewish problem exists only in the region of Gebietskommissar Riga. According the census some 30,000 Jews have registered to date. Construction of the ghetto in the Moscow suburb is about to be completed. By November 1, the last Jew will have disappeared from Riga's urban landscape."³⁸

The Moscow suburb was one of the most neglected areas of the city and home to the poorer members of the Jewish community. Many of the Jews moved into the ghetto area several weeks before October 25, 1941, the date it was due to be closed. Between 30,000 and 32,000 Jews lived in the ghetto.³⁹

A small section of the ghetto was fenced off with barbed wire on November 26, and its inhabitants were ordered to relocate to other parts of what was now called the "large ghetto." The evacuated "small ghetto" now served as living quarters for the working men, who were kept apart from their families. On November 30 and December 8–9, 1941, 25,000–28,000 Jews were removed from the large ghetto and taken 8 kilometers out of town to the Rumbula forest, where they were shot. Among those murdered on November 30, 1941, was the famous Jewish historian Shimon Dubnov. Some 4,000 men remained in the small ghetto, as well as 300 women who had been registered as seamstresses and whose accommodation was separate from the men's. The large ghetto had to be occupied by Jews deported from Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.⁴⁰

The murder of Jews in Daugavpils had begun during the first days of the occupation. According to the Einsatzgruppen report, in early July Sonderkommando 1b, aided by the Latvian police, had executed 1,150 Jewish men. The Daugavpils ghetto was established in the last week of July 1941 in barracks belonging in the past to the Latvian army. Jews were brought in from nearby townships, and by early August some 16,000 Jews were living there in overcrowded conditions.⁴¹

Thousands of Jews were murdered in a series of extermination actions during August 1941. The murders took place in the forested region of Pogulanka, 8 kilometers from the town, and in the Peski region, near the town. The murders were carried out by a subunit of Einsatzkommando 3 operating in Daugavpils between mid-July and August 21, 1941. According to the Jäger report, 9,012 Jews were

murdered there during this period.⁴² Another action was carried out on November 7–9, in which between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews were murdered by Sonderkommando Arajs, who had arrived from Riga. The last 950 Jews in Daugavpils were members of essential professions.⁴³

About 1,000 Jews were murdered in Liepāja during July. Most of the murders took place on the beach near the lighthouse. Although on a smaller scale, the murders continued into August and September. Between 2,700 and 2,800 people were murdered on December 15–17, 1941. In the town, between 300 and 350 holders of work permits remained; with their families, they totaled around 1,000. A further 200 Jews were murdered between February and April 1942. In Liepāja a suitable location was found for the ghetto only in July and August 1942; about 800 people were ghettoized.⁴⁴

According to the summary report of Einsatzkommando 2 from early 1942, “By the end of October, all the rural areas of Latvia were completely cleansed [of Jews]. In order to remove absolutely from public life those Jews who are essential to the workforce, they were concentrated in ghettos established in Riga, Daugavpils, and Liepāja. . . . The remaining Jews were not included in the actions, since they constituted a professional workforce that has no substitute for the existence of the economy, especially the war economy.”⁴⁵

Of the 74,000–75,000 Jews who had lived in Latvia at the time of the German invasion, fewer than 6,500 were still alive by early 1942.

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT ESTONIA

Between 1,200 and 1,500 Jews remained in Estonia under German occupation. Sonderkommando 1a, under the command of Dr. Martin Sandberger, arrived in Estonia at the end of July or in early August 1941. All the anti-Jewish decrees imposed in the German-occupied areas—population census, concentration, marking, forced labor, confiscation of property—were enforced against the Jews of Estonia.⁴⁶ Sonderkommando 1a was assisted in its murderous activity by a unit of the Estonian “Self-Defense,” belonging to the fascist organization “Omakaitse,” from which the Estonian Sipo unit, under the command of Ein Mere, had been formed. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated October 12, 1941:

The Estonian self-defense units which were formed when the [German] army marched in immediately started to arrest Jews. . . . All male Jews over 16, with the exception of physicians and the appointed Jewish elders, were executed by Estonian self-defense units. . . . So far, the total number of Jews shot in Estonia is 440. . . . The countryside is now free of Jews.⁴⁷

From mid-September until December, Jews held in prisons in Tallinn (Reval) were executed; others were transferred to Camp Harku near the city.⁴⁸ The executions of the Jews were carried out in Kalevi-Liiva, near Tallin. In late 1941 and early 1942, some 500 Jews remaining in Camp Harku were transferred to the Pskov region—where some subunits of Einsatzgruppe A operated—and shot in February 1942.⁴⁹ No ghettos were in Estonia. On January 20, 1942, it was noted in the minutes of the Wannsee Conference that “Estonia is free of Jews.”⁵⁰

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT BELORUSSIA

In Belorussia the murder of Jews had already begun during the military administration and continued through September 1941 with the onset of ghettoization, when some of the territories had come under civil administration. Based on experience in ghettoizing the Jews of Lithuania and Latvia, the administration continued the principle of two ghettos in many of the region’s larger towns—one for the economically “useful” Jews, and the second for all the others. In this way the administration simplified the extermination schedule. The “useful” Jews and their families were destined to be the last to be murdered.

The first mass murder in western Belorussia took place in Bialystock, which fell to the Germans on June 27. The German forces who entered the city were accompanied by Police Battalion 309, who started its murder action. Some 800 Jewish men were led to the big synagogue in the Jewish quarter, the doors were closed, and the building was incinerated. Anyone trying to jump out of the windows was shot; 2,000 Jews were shot or burned on that day. Einsatzkommando 8 arrived in the city on July 1, and on July 3 some 300 of the Jewish intelligentsia were taken out of town and shot. Further killings of some 4,000 Jewish men in Bialystock on July 12–13 were carried out by police battalions 316 and 322. The killings took place in the forested region of Pietrasze, 3.5 kilometers out of town. Between 6,500 and 7,000 Jewish men were murdered in and near Bialystock during the first two weeks of German occupation.⁵¹

Einsatzkommando 8 moved from Bialystok to Baranovichi, to Novogrudok and Slonim. Slonim, on the eve of the invasion, had 20,000 Jews, including refugees from Poland, and 1,255 Jews were murdered there on July 14, 1941.⁵² In another action on November 13–14, some 10,000 Jews were murdered. The Gebietskommissar of Slonim, Gerhard Erren, wrote in his report on this action:

When I arrived at the Slonim area, there were some 25,000, of whom 16,000 lived in Slonim proper—two-thirds of the town’s population. . . . The action carried out by the Sipo on November 13, 1941, has freed me of the unnecessary guzzlers [unnotigen Fressern]. The 7,000 remaining Jews in Slonim have

entered the labor process, and are doing it willingly, out of a constant fear of death. . . . For the time being, the countryside has undergone large-scale cleansing by the army. Unfortunately, this has been done only in towns with less than 1,000 inhabitants.⁵³

The murder of the Jews of Slonim took place in Chepilovo, 7 kilometers from the town. Two ghettos were established in Slonim in December, one for those employed by the Germans and the other for everyone else. Jews from neighboring townships (Derechin, Byten, Ivachevichi, and Kosov) were brought to Slonim between January and March 1942.

In Baranovichi, whose pre-invasion Jewish community numbered around 10,000, almost 400 Jewish men were murdered in July. The Baranovichi ghetto, which was divided into two parts and connected by a narrow passageway, was established in late November.⁵⁴ In Novogrudok, which on the eve of the invasion had a Jewish population of some 7,000, about 200 Jews, most of them members of the town's intelligentsia, were murdered during the first half of July 1941. Four thousand Jews, including members of the Jewish council, were murdered on December 8. Following the killing, a ghetto was established during the second half of December in the Pereseika quarter to house the remaining 1,700 Jews. This ghetto, too, was divided into two parts, the first for the employed and their families, the second for all the others, including several thousand Jews deported from neighboring townships.⁵⁵ During November and December, a ghetto was established in Lida. Some 7,000 Jews were placed in the ghetto; this number grew as a result of the transfer to the ghetto of Jews from neighboring townships.⁵⁶

On its way from Vilnius to Vitebsk, on July 29–30, 1941, Einsatzkommando 9 stopped for a few days in Vileika, where it murdered most of the township's Jewish population, including women and children. Only 100 professionals remained, out of the town's approximately 1,000 prewar Jewish population.⁵⁷

Although acts of murder were conducted in towns and townships throughout western Belorussia, in contrast to the situation in other parts of Ostland—Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—most of the Jews of western Belorussia were still alive after the winter of 1941–42. The civil administration in Generalkommissariat Belorussia ghettoized most of the country's Jews between October 1941 and January 1942.

The Belorussian capital, Minsk, fell to the Germans on June 28, 1941, and units of Einsatzgruppe B arrived in the city on July 3 and 4. Several days after the occupation, the German Feldkommandant ordered "the arrest of all male inhabitants between the ages of 18–45," regardless of nationality.⁵⁸ The men were taken out of town to Drozdy, where they joined thousands of prisoners of war in an open-air camp. Sonderkommando and military police (GFP) in the camp

carried out searches after Jews and communist activists. The harsh conditions under which the prisoners were held, the lack of food, and the constant shootings are described in a report sent to Rosenberg on July 10, 1941:

In the prisoner of war camp at Minsk, the size of which is equal to that of Wilhelm Platz, some 100,000 prisoners of war and 40,000 civilians are being held. The imprisoned who are concentrated in this limited space can barely move and carry out their bodily functions where they stand. A company size unit is guarding the camp. . . . The limited guard force, which bears the burden of guarding, without being replaced for days on end, turns to the prisoners in the only possible language, and that is the language of weapons, and they do this mercilessly.⁵⁹

It may be assumed that at least 10,000 men, a quarter of the 40,000 civilian males concentrated in Drozdy, were Jews.⁶⁰ Thirteen days after being brought to Drozdy, the civilians were separated from the prisoners of war and the Jews from the non-Jews. According to one of the Jews at Drozdy:

Suddenly a car drove up, and it was announced that Poles were to gather on the left, the Russians on the right, and the Jews next to the river. . . . It was announced that Poles and Russians were to be released. No mention is made of the Jews. . . . On the seventh day [in Drozdy], a car arrived with an interpreter who announced that all Jewish engineers, doctors, technicians, bookkeepers, and educated persons must register, they would be released from the camp and sent to work. There were 3,000 such persons and they began to register. Later the people learned that all these educated persons were shot.⁶¹

According to the July 13, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, 1,050 Jews were executed at the camp following the investigation, and the executions were continuing.⁶² During the second half of July the remaining Jewish men were transferred from Drozdy to the prison in Minsk; a few days later, some of them were released, and the others stayed on for months in the city prison, where they were put to work.⁶³ Minsk was one of the first place in the occupied Soviet territories in which the Germans ghettoized the Jews. The following order was published on July 19, 1941, on behalf of the city Feldkommandant:

All the Jewish inhabitants of the city of Minsk must within five days move to the Jewish quarter. Any Jews caught after this date in the non-Jewish region will be arrested and punished in accordance with the full weight of the law. . . . The residential area is bordered by these streets: Kolkhoznik Passage. . . . The Jewish quarter will be separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall. . . . It is forbidden to climb over the wall. The German and local guard have

been ordered to shoot at anyone trying to disobey this order. . . . In order to cover the costs of transfer to the Jewish quarter, on the Jewish council has been imposed an obligatory loan of 30,000 Chervonets. . . . Any deviation from this order will be severely punished.⁶⁴

Jewish council chairman Mushkin succeeded in persuading the military administration that five days would not be enough time to arrange the transfer to the Jewish quarter, and he was given an extension to August 1, 1941.⁶⁵ Some of the Jews brought to the Minsk ghetto came from Dzerzhinsk (Koidanovo), Cherven, and other townships. The Minsk ghetto housed about 70,000 Jews.⁶⁶

With the establishment of civil administration in Minsk in September 1941, a Sipo unit set up a permanent base in the area. On August 14 and 16, hundreds of men were removed from the ghetto. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated August 16, 615 people of "racially inferior stock" were executed.⁶⁷ On August 31 and September 1, 914 Jews were taken from the ghetto and shot by units of Police Battalion 322 together with the Sipo.⁶⁸ The Einsatzgruppen report for September 4, 1941, states that 214 Jews were murdered in Minsk because "Jews had attacked a member of the local auxiliary police and had repeatedly destroyed German army sign-posts." According to the September 23 report, "In the course of three days, a total of 2,278 persons were executed. The executed were comprised exclusively of saboteurs and Jewish activists. Among them were many who did not wear the prescribed badge on their clothing."⁶⁹ Between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews were murdered from August through October 1941.

On November 7, 1941, the day on which the citizens of the Soviet Union celebrated the October revolution, a large murder operation took place in the Minsk ghetto. Members of the Jewish council had been arrested the previous day (November 6) along with their families and hundreds of professionals and their families and led to a camp on Shiroka street. These were people that the German authorities had a need for and were keen to keep alive. The people rounded up in this action were concentrated in the city's Yubilee Square (Jubilainaya Ploshchad) in the ghetto. Thus, according to Smolar:

On the morning of November 7 an ss and Police unit burst into the ghetto. . . . With loud shouting and beating, the ss and Police ordered the Jews to climb onto the trucks, which, after being stuffed full of human beings, were driven off toward the nearby Camp Tuchinka. From the few Jews who survived and returned to us wounded, we have learned that thousands of men, women, and children had been forced into the granaries belonging to the NKVD's former sixth settlement [. . .] and thus it continued for two to three days. . . . Then the people were taken to large trenches. . . . Shouts and weeping filled the air all around and surpassed even the sound of machine gun fire.⁷⁰

Some 12,000 Jews were murdered in this action in Tuchinka. The following day, the Jewish council and professionals were returned to the ghetto with their families from the Shiroka Street camp. The area of the ghetto in which this action took place was subsequently placed outside the ghetto's boundaries, and the ghetto area became smaller.⁷¹ The action was carried out by German police battalions, the Sipo, the Belorussian police, and Lithuanian Schutzmannen from Police Battalion 12, under the command of Anastas Impulevicius.⁷² A further action took place at the Minsk ghetto on November 20 in the streets that had not been included in the earlier killings. Some 7,000 people were removed from the ghetto, taken to Tuchinka, and murdered.⁷³

The day after the November 7 killings in Minsk, 990 Jews were brought from Hamburg and accommodated in the separate ghetto, in the area from which the Jews had been removed the previous day. By the end of November, 6,963 Jews had been brought to this ghetto from Germany.⁷⁴ The two November killings were part of the plan to annihilate the Jews of the Soviet Union; however, the timing also coincided with the Nazi leadership's plan to expel German Jews to the occupied Soviet territories and to make space to accommodate them. Between 24,000 and 25,000 Jews were murdered in Minsk by the end of November 1941. Between 45,000 and 46,000 Jews remained in the ghetto.

Some ghettos were established in the eastern regions of Generalkommissariat Belorussia, which had been part of the old Soviet Union. On October 1, 1941, between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews—some local, others refugees from Poland—were concentrated in a ghetto in Uzda. They were shot on October 14. The German authorities allowed the families of fifteen professionals, including three physicians, to remain in Uzda, and on March 1, 1942 these were transferred—except for the physicians—to the Minsk ghetto.⁷⁵

German Police Battalion 11, under the command of Major Franz Lechthaler, which was based in Minsk and three Lithuanian Schutzmannschaften companies attached to it, carried out throughout October murder of Jews in the regions north and south of Minsk. These actions were part of what the Germans defined as “cleansing operations” in the occupied territories, and in Belorussia it was the army's Security division 707 that was placed in command of these operations. The October 14–21, 1941, report of Police Battalion 11 stated:

In general, the Belorussian population behaves peacefully. . . . But the Jews support the partisans and help them whenever possible. In any place where the Jews were rendered harmless, it has been quiet. . . . On October 14, the 2nd and 4th companies and two companies of the Schutzmannschaften cleansed the township of Smilovitchi [35 kilometers south east of Minsk] of Jews, communists, and other elements hostile to Germany: 1,300 people

were exterminated. . . . On October 21, 1941 . . . in Koidanovo 1,000 Jews and communists were liquidated. . . . In general, the region under the responsibility of Security division 707 may be considered one in which abatement has been achieved.⁷⁶

Some 7,500 Jews lived in the town of Slutsk, south of Minsk, on the eve of the war, and this number increased with the arrival of refugees from Poland between 1939 and 1941. Slutsk fell to the Germans on June 26, 1941, and only a few Jews managed to escape in time. The first murder action took place in Slutsk on October 27, 1941. Heinrich Carl, the Gebietskommissar of Slutsk, described events there in an October 30, 1941, letter to Kube, Generalkommissar of Belorussia, headed “Anti-Jewish Actions (Judenaktionen)”:

On October 27 at 8 in the morning, an Oberleutnant in the Eleventh Police Battalion arrived from Kaunas [Lithuania]. The Oberleutnant explained that the police battalion received an order to liquidate all the Jews in the town of Slutsk within two days. He pointed out that the battalion commander, with the entire battalion, including four companies, two of which consist of Lithuanian partisans, were approaching the town and that the action must begin immediately. . . . About half an hour later, the police battalion arrived in Slutsk. Immediately afterwards, I met the battalion’s commander. . . . I asked to postpone the action by one day. But he refused this request and insisted that he had to conduct [such an] action in all the towns, and only two days had been allotted to Slutsk. . . . I stressed that the Jews were not to be liquidated arbitrarily. Many of the Jews in the town are artisans and their families. . . . The liquidation of Jews will paralyze the important factories at once. . . . It was agreed that all the Jews still in town will first be placed in the ghetto, in order to categorize them. . . . It transpired that the commander did not act at all in accordance with what had been agreed upon between us. All the Jews, without exception, were removed from the factories and workshops and sent away, in contradiction of the agreement. . . . Already in the afternoon, complaints came in from all directions that it was no longer possible to operate the factories, since all the skilled Jewish workers had been taken away. After the battalion commander had left for Baranovichi, I contacted his deputy . . . and demanded that the action be stopped immediately and the damage already done was irreparable. . . . Due to my firm intervention, he finally stopped the action toward evening. During the action . . . with indescribable brutality on the part of the German officers, and especially of the Lithuanian partisans, the Jews, including some Belorussians, were taken from their homes and concentrated together. The shots could be heard all over town and the

corpses of Jews were piled in certain streets. . . . It was a horrible sight. Suffice to mention that some people who had been shot got out of the graves shortly after being covered [with earth]. The Belorussians who had complete faith in us remained dumbstruck. . . . This day adds no glory to Germany and will not be forgotten. . . . I would make one request: use all means to keep this police battalion well away from me.⁷⁷

Kube passed this letter on to Lohse and, in a letter of his own, asked for legal measures to be taken against the relevant police officers. He stressed further that Jewish artisans and skilled workers had to be kept alive and that any killings should be coordinated in advance with the Gebietskommissars. He added that all efforts must be made to avoid harming Germany's good reputation in the eyes of the Belorussian population. Lohse passed on these letters, with no comments, to Rosenberg.⁷⁸ There is nothing in these two letters to suggest de facto opposition to the murder of Jews, which they actually agree with. The opposition focuses only on three issues:

Potential harm to the war economy. For this reason, it was necessary to avoid executing Jewish skilled workers or their families.

Opposition to the brutal and chaotic manner in which the action was carried out; that more "humane" means should have been used. . . .

In order to maintain the Belorussian people's faith in Germany, any assault on them was unacceptable.

Gebietskommissar Carl's intervention prevented the planned annihilation of most of the Jews of Slutsk, although about 2,800 Jews had been murdered in this action near the village of Makrita, a few kilometers away from Slutsk.⁷⁹ In January 1942, all the Jews of Slutsk were closed in two ghettos: one inside the town, known by the Jews as "Gorodskoya" (the town ghetto), housing some 5,000 people, and the other, which the Jews called "Polevoy" (country ghetto). Some 1,000 people were put into this ghetto, mostly old and incapable of work. Jews from the neighboring townships were also forced into these ghettos.⁸⁰

Despite the murder operations, by early 1942, most of the Jews in Generalkommissariat Belorussia were still alive. Statistics on the murder victims (possibly as many as 100,000) and the survivors (about 140,000) are based on evaluations. Even the German authorities in Belorussia were not equipped with the exact numbers. According to the ss and Police Leader in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, dated early 1942:

The number of Jews in Generalkommissariat Belorussia today can only be roughly assessed, due to lack of accurate data. The Generalkommissar him-

self is unable to provide a true evaluation of the number of Jews still alive. Their total number, according to . . . this Sipo commando, may be in the region of 128,000; it can be determined that some 41,000 Jews were shot in killing actions. This number does not include actions carried out by previous Einsatzkommando groups, nor does it include executions of Jews carried out by the army. According to data-based evaluations, 19,000 people were shot by the army as partisans and criminals by December 1941. We would not be mistaken in saying that many more than half of these [were] Jews.⁸¹

As the report says, the numbers do not include Jews executed in July and August 1941 by Einsatzgruppe B and Orpo battalions and by army units, especially by 707 Infantry Division, which carried out killing operations in the countryside, before the permanent Sipo station was established. It can be stated in general terms only that, by early 1942, most of the Jews living in the region of Generalkommissariat Belorussia at the onset of German occupation were still alive. This is due to the fact that fewer ss and police forces were employed in Generalkommissariat Belorussia during those months than in other areas of Ostland. In Generalkommissariats Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, Einsatzgruppe A remained during the whole period and with the help of thousands of local volunteers, in well-organized police units, carried out the murder of the Jews there. Contrary to this, when Generalkommissariat Belorussia was established, Einsatzgruppe B with its Einsatzkommandos was already operating further to the east, in areas under military control, and it took time until the permanent Sipo unit was organized there. In addition to it, in Belorussia it was more difficult to mobilize and organize the local Schutzmannschaften, because the population there was less cooperative with the German occupation authorities than in the Baltic states, and motivation to volunteer to serve the Germans was more limited. In his October 15, 1941, report on local police forces, Stahlecker wrote: "In the former Polish region of Belorussia [. . .] it is rare to find suitable Belorussian forces. Thus police missions are carried out at a slower pace than in the Baltic states."⁸²

According to the January 11, 1942, EG report, which sums up the killings in Ostland up to the end of 1941: "In Belorussia, the purge is in progress."⁸³ However, despite the report's claims, the German administration was obliged during the winter months to halt the mass killings in Belorussia, due to the frozen ground that made it very difficult to dig pits—as Sturmabführer Hoffmann, of the Sipo in Minsk, reported to Kube at a January 29, 1942, meeting. But the Jews, he insisted, must be exterminated to the very last man, and "large-scale exterminations will be carried out in the spring."⁸⁴

According to estimates, the number of Jews who remained under German

occupation in the areas included in Generalkommissariat Belorussia was 140,000 to 150,000. About 60,000 were murdered by the end of 1941, and those who survived were 80,000 to 90,000 Jews.

TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF MURDERS IN OSTLAND

The vast majority of Jews in three of Reichskommissariat Ostland's four Generalkommissariats—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—were murdered by the arrival of winter 1941–42. Of the region's 280,000 Jews at the beginning of German occupation, some 48,000 survived; most of these were the families of men employed in enterprises serving the German war economy or supplying services to the local German administration. According to the report of EG A on its activity in Ostland, published in late December 1941: "The objective of the systematic cleansing operation in Ostland was a complete purge of the Jews, in accordance with the basic order. This objective was achieved in the main. . . . The remaining [Jews] in the Baltic lands were required to carry out urgent work requirements."⁸⁵

The suspension of the murder activity in the Baltic states toward the end of December 1941 was the outcome of a conflict of interests among the three German authorities active in Ostland—the civil administration, the Sipo, and the German army—and reached the top echelons in Berlin. It continued throughout a period of growing demand for manpower to fuel the German war effort and growing awareness that the war was not about to end in victory before the winter. The struggle was based on the dearth of professional and skilled labor, which became acute as the Jews, who provided a cheap source of labor, gradually disappeared.

In September or early October 1941, Gustav Hermann, head of the labor exchange in Generalkommissariat Lithuania, asked von Renteln to keep alive the working Jews of Lithuania. A similar request came from Hans Gewecke, Gebietskommissar of Shauliai. At a meeting in Generalkommissar von Renteln's office in early October, it was decided to ask the Reichskommissariat in Riga to spare the lives of Jewish artisans and their families.⁸⁶

Appeals arrived in Lohse's office from other parts of Ostland as well, asking him to stop the total annihilation of the Jews. Alnor, the Gebietskommissar of Liepaja in Latvia, sent a letter on October 11, 1941, to Drexler, the Generalkommissar of Latvia, in which he stressed that "extermination of the Jews, which was resumed last week, is causing considerable displeasure . . . especially the shooting of women and children. . . . Even the officers have been asking me if it was necessary to

exterminate children. . . . In no civilized country, not even in the Middle Ages, was it permitted to execute pregnant women.”⁸⁷

This letter was forwarded to Lohse, who banned the continued annihilation in Liepaja. Although no mention was made in this letter of the Jews’ role in the workforce, this probably affected Lohse’s reaction. Lohse’s ban aroused considerable objections from the Sipo, who complained about him to Rosenberg in Berlin. Dr. Georg Leibbrandt, head of the Political Department at the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, wrote to Lohse, pointing out that a complaint against his ban on anti-Jewish actions in Liepaja had been lodged by the Main Office of Security of the Reich. Lohse was required to report on the matter.⁸⁸ In early November, even before his response to Leibbrandt, Lohse received correspondence from Kube, with an attached letter from Gebietskommissar Carl, referring to the savagery of the murders in Slutsk and stressing the need to keep the Jewish artisans alive.

The Ostland branch of the Wehrmacht Quartermaster-General also intervened on behalf of the skilled Jewish workers in their employ. Friedrich Trampedach, head of the Political Department at Reichskommissariat Ostland (who was also in charge of Jewish affairs) noted in his records: “On November 7, 1941, Mey, an officer in Quartermaster-General’s Command in the Ostland, appeared [in my office] and swore to me that Jewish artisans employed in workshops and other armament factories of the Wehrmacht were being exterminated in Vilnius and could not be replaced by local workers. In these plants vehicles of combat units are repaired.”⁸⁹ That same day, Trampedach sent a telegram to the Gebietskommissar of Vilnius, with copies to the Wehrmacht commander in Ostland, to the Higher ss and Police Leader and to the Generalkommissar of Lithuania, in which he said: “I request you to prevent by all possible means depriving the Wehrmacht of Jewish workers which are irreplaceable for tasks of war economy.”⁹⁰ Following these demands—especially those of the Wehrmacht—Lohse replied on November 15, to Leibbrandt’s October 31, 1941, letter:

I have forbidden the wild executions of Jews in Liepaja because the way in which they were carried out was not justifiable. I would like to be informed whether your inquiry of October 31 is to be regarded as a directive to exterminate all the Jews in the Ostland? Is this to be carried out regardless of age, sex, and economic considerations, such as those of the Wehrmacht, for instance, in the case of skilled workers in the armament industry? So far, I have been unable to find such a directive in the regulations regarding the Jewish question in the brown file, or in other directives. Of course the cleansing of the Ostland of Jews is a necessary task: its implementation, however, must be coordinated with the needs of the war economy.⁹¹

Only on December 18, 1941, did Lohse receive a reply from Leibbrandt's deputy, Otto Brautigam, who wrote: "Clarification of the Jewish question, should be reached through verbal discussions. In principle, economic considerations should basically not be taken into consideration in settlement of the problem. Moreover, it is requested that questions arising be settled directly with the Higher ss and Police Leader."⁹²

According to this letter, economic interests were not to be a determining factor in postponing the extermination of Jewish workers, but it gave the civil administrations and the local ss authorities a free hand in deciding on the pace and timing of the extermination. Without waiting for a reply from Berlin, Lohse took steps to preserve the Jewish workforce. On December 3, 1941, he sent a secret letter to the Higher ss and Police Leader in Ostland and to the Generalkommissars in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Belorussia that was also brought to the attention of the Wehrmacht commander in Ostland:

The Chief Quartermaster of the Wehrmacht Command in Ostland has complained that armament plants and repair workshops have been deprived of Jewish skilled workers through their liquidation, and that there is no possibility of replacing them at the present time. I demand, unequivocally, that the extermination of Jews, employed as skilled workers in armament factories and workshops of the Wehrmacht, who cannot at this stage be replaced by local labor, be prevented. . . . Arrangements must be made to train local people as skilled workers as soon as possible. This order also applies to Jewish workers employed in enterprises that do not directly serve the Wehrmacht, but have important tasks to carry out within the framework of the war economy.⁹³

The order prevented the extermination of the remaining Jewish skilled workers and their families in the Baltic states. The final part of the letter gave the Gebietskommissars a mandate to leave in the ghettos not only Jews employed in enterprises who served the army but also Jews employed in workshops within and outside the ghetto. This order was of great significance in Lithuania, where some 43,000 Jews were still living—legally or not—in the ghettos. In Latvia the number of surviving Jews was only some 6,000. No Jews remained in Estonia. In Belorussia, where many thousands of Jews were still alive, but most of them were not included in the category of "skilled Jewish workers [. . .] employed in the war economy," the order was of little importance on the anti-Jewish policy there.

Even before the arrival of Lohse's decree, the Sipo had reconciled themselves to the fact that the working Jews in the Baltic states would have to stay alive. And thus, according to Jäger's report, dated December 1, 1941, two days before the dispatch of Lohse's letter:

There are no more Jews in Lithuania, apart from working Jews and their families. . . . I wanted to liquidate these working Jews and their families as well, but the civil administration and the Wehrmacht attacked me most sharply and issued a prohibition against having these Jews and their families shot. . . . The remaining working Jews and Jewesses are urgently needed, and I presume that this manpower will continue to be urgently needed even after the winter is over. . . . I am of the opinion that it is imperative to start at once with the sterilization of the male work-Jews to prevent propagation.⁹⁴

SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS OF BELORUSSIA
ANNEXED TO GENERALBEZIRK BIALYSTOCK

Following the German administrative division of the occupied territories, southwestern regions of Belorussia, including the cities of Grodno and Volkovysk, were transferred in mid-September 1941 to Generalbezirk Bialystock and placed under the authority of Erich Koch, Gauleiter of eastern Prussia and Reichskommissar of the Ukraine. Ghettoization began in this region in the fall of 1941. Grodno's Jewish population numbered around 25,000, including refugees from the General Government. On November 1, 1941, posters were billed in the streets of Grodno, calling on the Jews to move into two ghettos the following day. Some 15,000 people were crammed into ghetto number 1, which was established around the big synagogue and designed to house working Jews and their families. Ghetto number 2 was established in the Slobodka suburb and filled with some 10,000 Jews, classified as not useful.⁹⁵

In Pruzhany, northeast of Brest-Litovsk, were concentrated Jews from the neighboring townships, and toward the end of 1941, the ghetto Jews numbered around 18,000.⁹⁶ The town of Volkovysk, which had a Jewish population of between 8,000 and 10,000, was badly damaged by the German air force on the eve of occupation. The German authorities in Volkovysk were therefore unable to locate a suitable quarter in which to concentrate the Jews, and no ghetto was established there.⁹⁷ Until the spring of 1942 more ghettos were established in the towns and townships of Belorussia annexed to Generalbezirk Bialystock.⁹⁸

No major exterminations actions were carried out in the Grodno region until the end of winter 1941–42. The swift passage of Einsatzgruppe B across the region in June and July 1941, on its way east, left it no time to carry out actions of mass murder.

SUMMARY

The vast majority of the Jewish victims in Reichskommissariat Ostland, like in most of the occupied Soviet territories, between late June and mid-August 1941, had been young and middle-aged physically fit Jewish men as well as Soviet activists and suspected communist sympathizers. From mid-August to early December 1941, the murders took on all the characteristics of total annihilation of the Jewish people, irrespective of age or sex. In parallel, a change began taking place, particularly in large urban Jewish communities, where the Germans established their civil administration offices. For Jews, mainly young or middle-aged men, employed in working places essential to the war economy or in various services of the local German authorities, they and their families' execution was temporary postponed, and they were removed from the head of the murder queue to its end.

According to estimates, in round numbers, the number of Jews in the areas included in Reichskommissariat Ostland who remained under German occupation was 418,000 to 433,000. The number of Jews who were murdered was 2,89,000 to 294,000, and those who were there still alive numbered 129,000 to 139,000.

I2

Reichskommissariat Ukraine Ghettos and Extermination

GENERALBEZIRK VOLHYNIA

Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia included the regions of Volhynia and Polesie, which between the two world wars had been part of Poland, and the Kamenets-Podolsky region, which was part of Soviet Ukraine. Before being handed over to the German civil administration, a wave of anti-Jewish actions swept over the region, and thousands of Jews—mostly male—were murdered. The murders continued even after the establishment of civil administration.

Brest-Litovsk, which fell to the Germans on the first day of the invasion, had a prewar Jewish population of 25,000. In late June and early July, about 5,000 Jews were arrested and taken to the Kotelna suburb, where they were murdered by Sonderkommando 7b and Police battalion 307. According to a policeman who participated in the action, “The site of the executions was south of Brest-Litovsk. . . . Some 6,000 Jewish men were shot. . . . The action ended at 4 p.m. . . . The Jews in question went to their destiny in stoic silence and heroic behavior.” The order to ghettoize the Jews came in mid-November 1941, and on December 15 the two-part ghetto was closed. Heinrich Schöne, Generalkommissar of the Volhynia-Podolia Bezirk, set up his headquarters in Brest-Litovsk. In June 1942 he relocated it to Lutsk.¹

Pinsk in Polesie was conquered by the Germans on July 4, 1941. About half its 20,000 Jews—mostly male—were murdered between August 4 and 7, 1941, in actions carried out by the Second ss Cavalry Regiment, under the command of Sturmabführer Franz Magill, near the villages of Ivaniki and Kozliakovicz. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated August 20, “Instigation and incitements by the Jews continue to increase. In Pinsk, the Jews shot a local policeman. In an ambush in the vicinity of Pinsk a policeman had been killed. As a reprisal, 4,500 Jews were liquidated.” Some 10,000 Jews, most of them women and children, remained in Pinsk, where a ghetto was established on May 1, 1942, and more Jews were brought in from neighboring townships.²

On the eve of war, some 25,000 Jews lived in Rovno, Volhynia's largest city. Rovno fell on June 28, 1941. In July and August, 2,000 to 3,000 of its Jews were murdered. Erich Koch chose Rovno as the capital of Reichskommissariat Ukraine. On November 5, Dr. Beer, the Gebietskommissar of the city, informed the Jewish council that all Jews who did not possess *Scheine* were to report the following morning in order to join the workforce. Between 15,000 and 18,000 Jews who reported were taken to the Sosenki forest, 6 kilometers out of town on November 6 and 7, and murdered by the Police battalion 320, aided by an Einsatzkommando 5 subunit. At that time a murder operation of this scope in Generalbezirk Volhynia was extraordinary and could have been due to the wish of the Reichskommissar to get rid of the Jews in his capital and the need for office space and living accommodations in Rovno for the many Germans who were expected to take up positions in the Reichskommissariat.³ According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated December 8, 1941, "On November 6 and 7, 1941, an action against Jews that had been prepared for some time was carried out in Rovno, where about 15,000 Jews were shot. According to the orders of Higher ss and Police Leader, the organization of this action was in the hands of the German Order Police. Aussenkommando Rovno of Einsatzkommando 5 participated substantially in carrying out this action."⁴ In December 1941 a ghetto was established in the Wola neighborhood, and 5,000 Jewish workers with their families were forced into it.⁵

Lutsk, with its 20,000 Jews, was conquered on June 25, 1941. The Einsatzgruppen report dated July 16, 1941, describes the murders, carried out by German soldiers and Ukrainian police:

EK 4a. . . . Prior to their withdrawal, the Bolsheviks shot 2,800 out of 4,000 Ukrainians imprisoned in the Lutsk prison. According to the statement of 19 Ukrainians who survived the slaughter with more or less serious injuries, the Jews again played a decisive part in the arrests and shooting. . . . Three hundred Jews and 20 looters were arrested and shot on June 30. On July 2, the corpses of 10 German Wehrmacht soldiers were found. In retaliation, 1,160 Jews were shot by the Ukrainians with the help of one platoon of the police and one platoon of the infantry.⁶

There was no basis to accusations that Jews murdered Ukrainian prisoners on the eve of the Soviet withdrawal, but the Einsatzgruppen and other Germans used the accusations to justify the murder of Jews. In Lutsk, between 17,000 and 18,000 Jews were forced into the ghetto on December 11 and 12, 1941.⁷

Dubno, with a prewar Jewish population of around 7,000, was occupied on June 25, 1941. On August 21, 1,075 Jews, mainly male, were led to the Jewish

cemetery, where they were shot by Germans and Ukrainian police. The Dubno ghetto was established in the spring of 1942. Kovel, which on the eve of war had a Jewish population of over 13,000, fell to the Germans on June 28 and about 1,000 Jews were murdered during the first month of occupation. In Kovel, a ghetto was established only in the spring of 1942. Vladimir-Volynski, in which some 12,000 Jews lived on the eve of the German invasion, was conquered on June 24, one day before 500 Jews died in the German bombing of the town. More than 2,000 Jews, mostly men, were murdered in the course of five killing operations between early July and October 1941. In Vladimir-Volynski the ghetto was established in the spring of 1942. Kremenets, with its 8,000 Jews, was occupied on July 1, 1941. Some 800 Jews were murdered during the first few days of occupation by the Ukrainian police, who accused the Jews of murdering the Ukrainian prisoners, murdered by members of the NKVD, prior to their withdrawal. On March 1, 1942, nearly 9,500 Jews from Kremenets and neighboring towns were forced into a ghetto.⁸

Ostrog, whose prewar Jewish population stood at around 10,000, fell on July 3. Soon the Jews of Ostrog were accused of assisting the Soviet paratroopers seen in the vicinity. On August 4, the Jews were ordered by First ss Cavalry Brigade operating in the region to concentrate in one place. It was planned to execute them. The town's military commander intervened, claiming a need for laborers to clean up the town's ruins, and he prevented the extermination of most of the Jews. The ss temporary "made do" with the murder of only about 1,000 Jewish women, children, and old people. On September 1, all Jewish males were ordered to report, and the 2,500 who were selected from among them were taken to the nearby Nikitin forest and murdered. A ghetto in Ostrog was established in June 1942 and housed some 3,000 Jews.⁹

The Kamenets-Podolsky region had been part of Soviet Ukraine between the two world wars. It was captured by the German army on July 11, 1941, and in late July the region's remaining 11,000 Jews were forced into a ghetto established in the old city. By the last week of August 1941, some 18,000 Jews—mostly refugees from Poland or Transcarpathian Ukraine—had been expelled from Hungary to Kamenets-Podolski and its surrounding areas, where the Hungarian army still operated. Between 7,000 and 8,000 of these Jews were sent to the ghetto in the old city. The German military administration decided to liquidate the Jews deported from Hungary. The action was conducted under the command of Obergruppenführer Jeckeln, and his main force consisted of Police battalion 320, made up of Berlin police reserves, members of Jeckeln's staff company, Ukrainian police, and a 30-man Einsatzgruppe C detachment, which did the actual shooting. German and Hungarian army units helped in cordoning off the

area. The murder site was a location known as Porokhovye sklady (gunpowder stores).¹⁰ Over three days, from August 27 to 30, 1941, between 14,000 and 16,000 of the Jewish deportees from Hungary were murdered, together with thousands of the local ghetto Jews.¹¹ According to the eyewitness account of a Ukrainian policeman:

Three times I have taken part in executions of thousands of peaceful Soviet citizens. . . . The first time was on August 28, 1941, when in the region of Bialanovka in the suburbs of Kamenets-Podolski, no fewer than 4,000 citizens of the Jewish nation were shot dead. . . . We, the Schutzmannen, were placed around the Jews to guard them and prevent their escape. The [Jews] got undressed, and in groups of five or six, they were made to run toward the pits and two German murderers shot them. . . . Many people asked me to allow them to escape, but I returned them to the crowd.¹²

Several thousand Jews were brought to be murdered in Kamenets-Podolski from neighboring townships.¹³ According to the September 11, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, “In Kamenets-Podolski 23,600 Jews were shot in three days by a Kommando unit of the Higher ss and Police Leader.”¹⁴ Some 5,000 Jews remained in the Kamenets-Podolski ghetto following the late August killings.

The town of Proskurov (now Khmelnytskyi), whose prewar Jewish population numbered some 15,000, of whom two-thirds remained under German occupation, was conquered on July 8, 1941. About 800 Jews were murdered there in August or September. Two ghettos were established in August 1941 to house between 10,000 and 12,000 local and neighboring Jews. In October 1941, 8,000 Jews were taken to a ravine, about 2 kilometers to the east of the town, and murdered. Hundreds of Jews who managed to hide and survive this action found refuge in the skilled laborers’ ghetto. This ghetto housed between 2,500 and 3,000 Jews, and its Jewish council was headed by a woman.¹⁵

Starokonstantinov had 7,000 Jews on the eve of the German invasion. The Einsatzgruppen report dated August 21, 1941, described the action carried out by the ss, shortly after the fall of the town: “Since the Jews did not report for work recently, the military authorities had to round up the Jewish labor force early in the day. . . . It was established that Jews were conducting a flourishing trade with stolen cattle and goods. . . . In reprisal, the First ss Brigade carried out an action against the Jews in the course of which 300 males and 139 female Jews were shot.”¹⁶

A ghetto was established in Starokonstantinov in August 1941 to which Jews were brought from Ostropol, Grichev, and Stara-Siniava, and which continued to exist until May 1942.¹⁷ Shepetovka, which had a Jewish community of 5,000,

was taken in early July 1941. During the first few weeks of occupation, a police regiment operated in the area of Shepetovka. The activity report of this regiment stated, "Cleansing operations in the Shepetovka-Rovno area were accomplished. 370 Russians and 1,643 Jews were shot as instigators and accomplices."¹⁸ In January 1942 a ghetto was established in Shepetovka, and 6,000 Jews were crowded into it from the town and its surrounds. Overcrowding and terrible sanitation resulted in the outbreak of a typhus epidemic and other diseases.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the wave of anti-Jewish actions that swept the towns and townships in Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia, in which many thousands of Jews were murdered, more than half of the region's Jewish population was still alive by the beginning of 1942, closed behind ghetto walls.²⁰

HIMMLER'S KOMMANDOSTAB FORCES IN THE SWAMPS OF POLESIE

The swampy region of Polesie in southern Belorussia, which came under the jurisdiction of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, constituted the dividing line between Army Groups Center and South. The entire region was excluded for topographical reasons (marshes and few roads) from the German army's major advance routes, and some battered remains of the Soviet army remained in the region. Himmler, in coordination with the army, ordered the First ss Cavalry Brigade—part of his Kommandstab—to cleanse the swampy regions of the enemy and other hostile elements. According to Himmler's July 28, 1941, operation orders, "Dealing with the Population," a positive attitude had to be adopted toward the mainly Ukrainian local population in order "that these locals act against marauders and serve as our stronghold [*Stützpunkte*]. If, from a national point of view, the population is hostile, racially and individually inferior . . . , they may be suspected of supporting the partisans and be shot."²¹

In order to clarify unequivocally to the First ss Cavalry subunits the meaning of the expression "racially and individually inferior," a brief order was published on August 1, according to which, "in accordance with the explicit order issued by Reichsführer-ss, 'All Jews must be shot. Drive the female Jews into the swamps.'"²² The meaning of driving the women and actually with their children was that they would sink there and die. The whole cleansing operation was put under the command of HSSPF Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski. It included most of Polesie, from the Pruzhany-Kobrin line in the west, to the Gantsevichi-David Gorodok line in the east. In his report dated August 12, 1941, Sturmabführer Franz Magill, who commanded the Second ss Cavalry regiment in central Polesie, between Kobrin and Pinsk, wrote:

The Ukrainian and Belorussian populations are extremely friendly. . . . The Jewish looters were shot. Only a few skilled workers, employed in military workshops, were left alive. . . . Driving women and children into the swamps was unsuccessful, since the swamps are not deep enough to drown in. Usually, there is a layer of firm ground one meter down (probably sand), which made sinking impossible. The Ukrainian clergy were very helpful [and] placed themselves at our disposal. . . . The local Order Police, which mostly consists of former Polish policemen and a few former Polish soldiers, also made a good impression. They worked enthusiastically and took part in the struggle against the looters. . . . 6,526 looters were shot by the cavalry detachments.²³

Units belonging to the First ss Cavalry Brigade murdered Jews in David-Gorodok, Luninets, and other towns.²⁴ Standartenführer Hermann Fegelein, commander of the First ss Cavalry Brigade, wrote in his report, dated August 13, 1941, that “the total number of looters shot, predominantly Jews, was 13,788 and 714 prisoners captured. Our losses—two dead.” The commander goes on in his report to ask for his soldiers to be awarded medals for excellence.²⁵ It is clear from their losses that the ss cavalry encountered no Soviet troops, nor did they fight any battles; their two casualties were killed in a bomb explosion.

In this operation by the units of Kommandstab Himmler, it was the first time that Himmler’s order included the mass murder of Jewish women and children, by expelling them into the marshes to be drowned. This action signaled a turning point, from a policy of murdering men to total extermination of the Jews.²⁶

GENERALBEZIRK ZHITOMIR

Generalbezirk Zhitomir included eastern Polesie and the town of Mozyr in the north, which were part of Soviet Belorussia. To the west, it shared a border with Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia, and to the east, with Generalbezirk Kiev, in the south with Transnistria, which was under Romanian control. It included the town of Vinnitsa and its surrounds. Generalbezirk Zhitomir came under civil administration on October 20, 1941, headed by Generalkommissar Kurt Klemm. Already during the military administration, widespread actions had taken place in this region, and most of the Jews were murdered by police battalions and ss regiments or by subunits of Einsatzgruppe C.

Zhitomir, the capital of the Generalbezirk, was captured on July 9, 1941, and 10,000 Jews—one-third of the town’s prewar Jewish population—remained there under German occupation. Even before the ghetto was established, half of these Jews were murdered. The ghetto was liquidated on September 19, 1941. The ghetto Jews were accused of “sabotag[ing] the black-out regulations at night

and [lighting] up their windows during Russian air attacks,” and of shooting at local policemen.²⁷ Sonderkommando 4a carried out the murders. According to the Einsatzgruppen report on the Zhitomir murders:

A conference was called together with the military HQ (Feldkommandantur 197) on September 10, 1941. The resulting decision was the final and radical liquidation of the Jew of Zhitomir. . . . On September 19, 1941, from 4 o'clock [a.m.], the Jewish quarter was emptied after having been surrounded and closed the previous evening by 60 members of the Ukrainian militia. The transport [deportation] was accomplished in 12 trucks, part of which had been supplied by military headquarters and part by the city administration of Zhitomir. . . . 3,145 Jews were registered and shot. About 25–30 tons of linen, clothing, shoes, dishes, etc., that had been confiscated during the action were handed over to the officials of the NSV [Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt] in Zhitomir for distribution.²⁸

The military administration left a group of Jewish skilled workers in Zhitomir; these, together with their families, numbered 240 people.²⁹ In Korosten, north of Zhitomir, the prewar Jewish population had numbered some 11,000. The town fell to the Germans in July 1941, and the Jews were all murdered in mid-September. According to the September 20, 1941, Feldkommandantur 197 report, “In the entire region under the Feldkommandantur, almost no Jews were left. . . . There was not a need to establish ghettos, since most of the Jews in the Korosten area were shot by the SD.”³⁰

Berdichev was captured on July 7, 1941. Between 16,000 and 17,000 Jews remained in the town, about two-thirds of their prewar population. On August 25, a ghetto was established in the town's poorest neighborhood, near the Yatki marketplace. Two mass murders were carried out against the Jews of Berdichev during September:

On September 4, one week after the ghetto was organized, the Germans and traitors who had joined their police force ordered 1,500 young people to leave for agriculture work. . . . On [that] very day, they were shot between Lisaia-Gora and the village of Khanzhin. . . . On the night of the September 14, the entire ghetto area was surrounded by troops. At four in the morning, the SS troops and policemen began to rush into the apartments, wake people, and drive them out into the bazaar square. Many of those who could not walk were killed on the spot. . . . Reder and Koroliuk stood on a small hill, groups of people were led up to them, and they selected, from each group, two or three people known to possess certain skills. Four hundred were separated from the group. . . . Those selected were permitted to take their families with

them. Many were unable to find their wives and children, who had gotten lost in the enormous crowd. . . . Four kilometers separated Yatki from the place of execution. . . . Policemen, members of their families, and the mistresses of the German soldiers rushed to loot the vacated apartments. Some walked past the guards and took scarves and knitted woolen sweaters from women and girls awaiting their deaths. . . . On that day, September 15, 1941, in a field next to Berdichev airfield, 12,000 were murdered.³¹

The Berdichev ghetto was greatly reduced and subsequently housed only the 400 artisans with their families and those Jews who had managed to hide or escape—a total of between 2,000 and 2,500 people. Most of these were murdered on November 3, 1941, with the exception of 150 people, artisans and their families, who were transferred to the Lisaia-Gora camp. More artisans from neighboring townships were brought to Lisaia-Gora, and the number of Jews reached 500.³²

Vinnitsa was conquered on July 21, 1941, and of the more than 34,000 strong pre-invasion Jewish population, some 17,000 remained. About 160 Jewish men were murdered in early August, and 600 were shot during the early part of September 1941.³³ Over September 19 and 20, a large murder operation took place in the Piatnichansk forest; about 10,000 Jews, mainly women, children, and the old people, were murdered. This action was carried out by Reserve Police battalion 45 and Police battalion 314, aided by the local police. A ghetto was established in Vinnitsa in late September 1941; some 5,000 Jewish artisans and physically fit working Jews moved in.³⁴

The town of Khmelnik, north of Vinnitsa, which had a prewar Jewish population of some 6,000, fell to the Germans in early July 1941. Four hundred Jewish men were murdered in Khmelnik on August 12, 1941. In December, a ghetto was established, to accommodate Jews from the town and from the surrounding area. Some 7,000 people were murdered in an action on January 9, 1942. Searches among the gentile population resulted in a round-up of about 1,200 Jews, all of whom were executed on January 16, 1942. In the ghetto, only a few hundred working Jews and their families remained.³⁵

Mozyr had a prewar Jewish population exceeding 6,300. Since the town was taken by the Germans on August 22, 1941, two full months after the invasion, over 75 percent of the town's Jewish population had had time to evacuate. In November 1941, about 1,500 of the remaining Jews were forced into a ghetto, and a further 2,500 to 3,000 Jews were brought in from nearby towns and villages. The ghetto was liquidated during the first half of January 1942, along with all of its inhabitants.³⁶

Novograd-Volynskii, whose prewar Jewish population numbered 7,000, fell to the Germans on July 10, 1941. Thousands of Jews had managed to flee the town, but many of the escapees were caught by the Germans and shot. A ghetto was established in Novograd-Volynski to house the town's remaining 2,000 Jews, and more Jews were brought in from Emilchino and Yarun. On September 20, 1941, the ghetto was liquidated and 3,200 Jews were murdered.³⁷

Most of the Jewish communities in hundreds of towns, townships, and villages (*kolkhozes*) throughout Generalbezirk Zhitomir were murdered during the period between the beginning of the occupation and winter 1941–42. Some of the ghettos continued to exist until spring 1942.³⁸ German police battalions, together with Ukrainian police and Waffen-ss regiments, under the command of Higher ss and Police Leader South, participated in all these actions and, being much larger in number than the Einsatzgruppe C units, they carried out the murder of most of the Jews in the Ukraine during this period. According to the September 25, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, “The units of the Higher ss and Police Leader during the month of August shot a total of 44,125 persons, mostly Jews.”³⁹

Throughout August 1941 most of these units, especially First ss Brigade, were engaged in Generalbezirk Zhitomir and the regions of Novograd-Volynski, Korosten, and Zhitomir in carrying out “cleansing operations” (*Sauberungsaktionen*), murdering Jews, partisans, and “suspects” who had been arrested for having no identity papers.⁴⁰

GENERALBEZIRK KIEV

The western and southern regions of the district of Kiev were taken by the Germans during the second half of July and August 1941. The city of Kiev itself was conquered only on September 19, 1941. Kiev and large areas of central Ukraine were cut off from the east by German army in August 1941, and large numbers of evacuated or escaping Jews were unable to get away. Thousands of Jewish refugees trapped in the besieged region were murdered on the road.

The first city in Generalbezirk Kiev where an extermination action took place was Belaya Tserkov. The prewar Jewish population there had been 9,500 and after its fall on July 16, 1941, an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 remained. The town's entire Jewish population was annihilated in mid-August.⁴¹ According to a report from Feldkommandantur in Belaya Tserkov to Security division 454, dated September 11, 1941, “Many of the Jews in Belaya Tserkov were shot. All the others escaped. In fact, no more Jews remain there.”⁴²

After the extermination of the town's Jews, 100 Jewish children were found in one of the vacated apartments, left behind. Two German documents record the

fate of these children. According to an August 21, 1941, report from the chaplain of 295 Infantry Division to Lt. Col. Helmuth at Division HQ:

Yesterday, August 20, at about 15:00, the Division's Catholic priest and I were visited by two priests from the nearby field hospital. They told us that about 500 meters from here, they found between 80 and 90 babies and children under school age, in one of the buildings. Their shouts and weeping could be heard a long way off. . . . I went with the two priests and my friend the Catholic priest to this house and saw children sitting and lying down in two small rooms—some in their own filth—and the main thing is that there was not a drop of drinking water and the children were terribly thirsty. A Ukrainian policeman was guarding them. We learned from him that these are Jewish children whose parents had been shot. A group of German soldiers stood around the house, and another group stood at another corner of the house, and the two discussed excitedly what they had seen and heard. Since I assume that it is undesirable for such things to become common knowledge, I am reporting it.⁴³

That day, the division's commander sent a report to the commander of the Sixth Army, Generalfeldmarschall von Reichenau, who ordered EK 5 commander Blobel to leave immediately for Belaya Tserkov with the Sixth Army representative to assess the situation. At the same time, he decided that "the action that had begun had to be completed, but in a suitable manner."⁴⁴ The meaning of this decision was that the murder of the last remaining children must be continued. Obersturmführer August Hafner of Sonderkommando 4a, who participated in the execution of the children, testified:

Blobel ordered me to execute the children. I asked him: who is going to carry out the shooting? He replied: the Waffen-ss. I said to him: They are all young people. How can we explain to them that they are to shoot small children? . . . I suggested that the execution be carried out by the Ukrainian police, under the command of the Feldkommandantur. No one opposed this suggestion. . . . I set off for the woods. . . . Soldiers had already dug the pit. The children were brought in. . . . They were placed alongside the pit and they were shot. . . . I remember especially a little blonde girl who grabbed my hand. She, too, was shot. . . . Some of the children had to be shot four or five times before they died.⁴⁵

Uman, whose Jewish population on the eve of war numbered around 13,500, was conquered on July 30. Approximately half of the Jews were evacuated or they escaped in time. Thus, according to the Einsatzgruppen report dated October 20, 1941:

A large number of Jews from near and far have gathered in Uman. . . . The number has been reported at about 8,000. A good intelligence net was discovered among the Jews of Uman. . . . A two-day action was agreed upon in order to combat this source of danger in Uman. On September 21, 1941, contrary to the plan, excesses were perpetrated against the Jews by members of the police with participation of numerous German soldiers. . . . Naturally, the systematic action of Einsatzkommando 5 suffered greatly by these [unplanned] excesses against the Jews in Uman. In particular, a large number of the Jews were now forewarned and escaped from the city. . . . The results [i.e., damage] of these excesses were cleaned up immediately by Einsatzkommando 5 [shortly] after its arrival. In the remainder of the action, 1,412 Jews were executed by Einsatzkommando 5 in Uman on September 22 and 23, 1941. The South Armies Group was informed about the part played by the Wehrmacht in the anti-Jewish excesses.⁴⁶

One day after the Uman actions (September 24, 1941), von Rundstadt, the Army Group South commander, issued the following order in response to the EK 5 report:

Actions against communists and Jews will be carried out only by special Sipo units. The participation of members of the armed forces in the excesses carried out by Ukrainians against the Jewish population is forbidden. Also forbidden is the presence at operations carried out by the special units and the photographing. . . . All the officers and NCOs are responsible for carrying out this order.⁴⁷

The number of murdered Jews in Uman greatly exceeded that quoted in the Einsatzgruppen report. In describing the operation, Ober Leutnant Bingel, whose detachment had guarded the execution area and who had witnessed it, cited the number of murdered as 6,000.⁴⁸

Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, fell to the Germans on September 19, 1941. Its Jewish population on the eve of war numbered some 230,000, and since most of these had managed to be evacuated or had escaped in time, and many of the men had been mobilized, only 60,000 to 70,000 Jews remained under German occupation. Sonderkommando 4a entered Kiev on September 24, 1941, together with the Einsatzgruppe C command. Several thousand Jews were executed during the first days of occupation.⁴⁹

A few days after the arrival of the German army, buildings began exploding in the center of Kiev. These had previously housed the Soviet administration offices and were taken over, with the occupation, by German military HQ. Prior to its

withdrawal, the Red Army had wired the buildings with explosive devices, and a team of NKVD people who had remained behind in the city had used electronic means to activate the devices. Blame for these explosions fell on the Jews, as the Einsatzgruppen report stipulated:

On September 20, the citadel blew up, and the Artillery Commander and his chief of staff were killed. On September 24, violent explosions in the quarters of the Feldkommandantur; the ensuing fire has not yet been extinguished. Fire in the center of town. . . . Blasts continuing. . . . As has been proven, Jews played a preeminent part. Allegedly 150,000 Jews living here. . . . Execution of at least 50,000 Jews planned. German Army welcomes measures and demands drastic procedure.⁵⁰

A meeting was convened on September 26, 1941, which was attended by the military governor of Kiev, Major-General Friedrich Eberhardt, the Higher ss and Police Leader of Army Group South, Jeckeln; commander of EG C, Rasch, and Blobel, commander of SK 4a. It was decided at that meeting to annihilate all the Jews of Kiev.⁵¹ The task was imposed on SK 4a, assisted by an HQ subunit of EG C and Police battalions 4 and 303 belonging to Police Regiment 10, together with Ukrainian police forces. On September 28, notices were posted all over the city by the newly organized Ukrainian police:

All the Jews of Kiev and its surroundings [. . .] had to report on September 29, 1941, at 6:00 in the morning, at the corner of Melnikova and Dektiarivska streets [in the vicinity of the cemetery]. They had to bring with them their personal documents, money and valuables, as well as warm clothing, underwear, etc. Any Jew who does not obey this order and is found elsewhere will be shot. Any inhabitant caught entering apartments left by the Jews will be shot.⁵²

The announcement did not mention what was to be done with those Jews who did report, but, according to the Einsatzgruppen report, “verbal information was passed that all the Jews of Kiev would be moved to another place.”⁵³ According to relevant testimony, “The Jews believed that the Germans wanted to send them elsewhere. They were horrified by the Ukrainians’ anti-Semitism and tried to distance themselves as far as possible from the Ukrainians. When they received the German notice, they believed they were on their own and would work until the end of the war.”⁵⁴ Dina Wasserman described events in Kiev on September 28, 1941:

My husband was a Russian and I was registered in my passport as Russian. . . . The day after the outbreak of war my husband went to the front and I stayed behind with my two small children and an ailing mother. . . . When I saw the notices in the streets and read the order: ‘All the Jews of Kiev . . . ’

I dressed my two children and took them to my Russian mother-in-law. Then I took my sick mother and we set off on the way to Babi Yar. The Jews went in hundreds, in thousands. Alongside me went an old Jew with a long white beard, wrapped in a prayer shawl and *tefillin*. He was praying. . . . Little children were crying. Old people who found it hard to walk groaned quietly and continued on their sad way. Russian husbands accompanied their Jewish wives. Russian wives accompanied their Jewish husbands. As we approached Babi Yar, we heard gunfire and barbarous shouting. . . . As we passed through a gate, we were ordered to hand over our personal documents and valuables and to undress. A German came up to Mother and pulled the gold ring off her finger. . . . I went to a table at which sat a fat officer. I showed him my passport and said quietly, "I'm a Russian." Suddenly a [Ukrainian] policeman came running up and said, "Don't believe her. She's Jewish. We know her." The German ordered me to wait and to stand aside. I watched as each time another group of men, women, old people, and children whose turn it was, undressed. They were all led to the open trench and shot. . . . I saw a young woman, completely naked, nursing a naked baby, and then a policeman ran up to her, snatched the baby away from the woman's breast, and hurled it still alive into the trench. The mother jumped in after him. . . . The German who had ordered me to wait led me to his commander, showed him my passport, and said, "The woman claims to be Russian, but the policeman knows her as a Jew." The commander looked at the passport and said, "Dina isn't a Russian name. You're a Jew. Take her away." The policeman ordered me to undress and pushed me toward the steep slope, where a group stood waiting for its fate. But, before the shots were fired, out of fear, I fell in, onto the corpses. . . . I pretended to be dead. Beneath me and on top of me, lay dead and wounded—many of them were still breathing, others were groaning. . . . I pushed the bodies off me. I was afraid of being buried alive. . . . It started getting dark. Germans with submachine guns went past and shot at the wounded. . . . I showed no sign of life. Later, I felt that we were being covered with earth. . . . When it was completely dark and there was silence, I opened my eyes and saw that there was no one all around. . . . Suddenly I felt someone moving behind me. . . . I turned back and asked quietly, "Who are you?" I was answered by a soft, childish voice: "Auntie, don't be afraid. I'm Fima Schneidermann. I'm eleven." . . . We both started moving.⁵⁵

According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated October 2: "Sonderkommando 4a, in collaboration with Einsatzgruppe HQ and two Kommandos of police regiment South, executed 33,771 Jews in Kiev on September 29 and 30, 1941."⁵⁶ The Einsatzgruppen report dated five days later pointed out that the number of Jews

murdered in Kiev was around 36,000 and that “the Jews that have not yet been caught or who will return will be treated accordingly.”⁵⁷ Not all the Jews obeyed the order to report; thousands remained in their homes, and others went into hiding. For weeks and months, Jews were apprehended in Kiev and its surrounds, taken to Babi Yar, and murdered. The Ukrainian police chief in Kiev issued an order to concierges and housekeepers to report the presence in their houses of all Jews, NKVD and Communist Party members, to their nearest police station within twenty-four hours. Concealing such people, said the order, was punishable by death. The order went on to say that “concierges and housekeepers were authorized to bring all Jews to the Jewish camp located close to the prisoner of war camp on Kerosinna Street.”⁵⁸

After the late September murders, any Jews caught in the city and its vicinity were murdered. On October 18, 1941, “300 insane Jews from the Kiev lunatic asylum were liquidated.”⁵⁹ Executions of Jews continued ceaselessly, and EK 5, which was quartered in Kiev with most of its forces, reported the murder of 10,650 Jews between November 2 and November 18, 1941.⁶⁰ Jews from Kiev were doubtlessly included among this number. Jews were also among those executed as part of the German retaliation operations. According to an order issued by the German army commander in the Ukraine on October 10, 1941, the desired ratio among the hostages was 50 percent Jews and the remainder—Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians—in equal proportion.⁶¹

A communiqué issued by Major General Eberhardt on November 2, 1941, pointed out that 300 inhabitants of Kiev were executed for subversive activity, and a November 29, 1941, communiqué stated that 400 men had been executed for sabotaging a telephone wire.⁶² There is no doubt that at least half of these victims were Jews who had been arrested and held in prisons or in the camps on Kerosinna Street and at Pecherskaia-Lavra.⁶³

Cherkassy was conquered on August 22, 1941. On the eve of war, its Jewish population had been around 8,000, and at most, one-third of these remained under German occupation. During September, a subunit of EK 5 was active in the region of Cherkassy. An October 10 decree ordered all Jews to move into a ghetto within two days. Moreover, according to the decree, the punishment for any attack on German administration employees would be the execution of 50 Jews and 10 communists, and any acts of arson were punishable by the execution of 100 Jews and 20 communists.⁶⁴ On December 18, 1941, the ghetto was liquidated and all its inhabitants were murdered.⁶⁵

Parts of the Poltava district, including the city of Poltava and the towns Zaporozhe and Lubny and other townships, were included in Generalbezirk Kiev. Poltava, whose prewar Jewish population numbered some 13,000, was con-

quered on September 18, 1941. Between one-quarter and one-third of the city's Jews remained under German occupation. In October, SK 4b murdered 723 of the city's Jews.⁶⁶ According to a Soviet report on Poltava:

The city's Jews were concentrated on November 23, 1941, in Pushkin Street, at the edge of town, in order to "transfer them to settlement elsewhere." The Jews were robbed of valuables, money, clothes, and shoes. They were shot, and their corpses were thrown into an antitank trench. The children were thrown alive into pits. Throughout the night, people living nearby could hear the groans of dying people who had been buried alive.⁶⁷

According to the Einsatzgruppen report on the November 23, 1941, action, 1,538 people had been murdered and "their clothing was handed over to the mayor of Poltava, who gave special priority to ethnic Germans when distributing it."⁶⁸

Kremenchug, whose prewar Jewish population exceeded 20,000, was captured on September 8, 1941. Some 7,000 Jews remained in the town under German occupation. In a population census on September 26, 3,500 people registered themselves as Jewish and 100 admitted to being the offspring of mixed marriage. Although about half of the town's Jews did not register as such, this was not enough to save them. The Jews were concentrated in the Novaia Ivanovka suburb and held there for a brief period. More than 3,000 Jews were shot on October 28, on the Kremenchug-Peschannoe road.⁶⁹ The murders continued until November 7, by which time the entire Jewish population had been annihilated. The Ukrainian policemen who had taken part in the murders were given permission to take the clothes left by the dead Jews; fights broke out among them over parceling out the spoils.⁷⁰ A report by the Feldkommandantur 239 responsible for the Kremenchug region referred to the period between October 15 and November 15, 1941, thus: "Kremenchug is almost purged of Jews. Two Jewish physicians remain to care for the civilian population. Without these, it would be impossible to ensure medical care."⁷¹

In Kremenchug, an attempt was made to rescue Jews by converting them to Christianity. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated January 16, 1942, "The mayor of Kremenchug, Vershovsky, was arrested and shot. . . . In his order of September 28, 1941, he succeeded in sabotaging the handling of the Jewish problem by having a great number of Jews baptized in order to remove them from German control."⁷² And the Einsatzgruppen report of March 6, 1942, which dealt with the same issue, said that the mayor had "used false data and authorized the chief priest Protyorei Romansky to baptize the Jews whom he himself had selected, giving them Christian or Russian first names. His immediate arrest prevented a larger number of Jews from evading German control."⁷³ According

to a Soviet document, the baptism was carried out in return for bribes, it did nothing to save the Jews, and “the entire operation was done only in order to rob the Jewish population.”⁷⁴

The Jews of Lubny and neighboring towns were ordered by the military commander to report for relocation on October 16, 1941. The 1,900 Jews who obeyed the order were taken to an antitank trench near the town and shot.⁷⁵

Kirovograd, whose prewar Jewish population had been around 15,000, fell to the Germans on August 4, 1941. A population census following the occupation listed 5,000 Jews, but many people had avoided registration.⁷⁶ The Einsatzgruppen report on the subject says, “At Kirovograd, it became known that Jews tried to obtain from the registry office identity papers with a false nationality. Several Jews, on the basis of forged papers, even succeeded in obtaining various posts with the administration. They also performed acts of ‘re-baptism’ through a system of patronage, as had been the old custom.”⁷⁷

The town’s 6,000 Jews were murdered beside an antitank trench northwest of the town in late September and early October.⁷⁸ By the end of 1941, all the remaining Jews in the other towns in the Kirovograd district had been murdered.⁷⁹

Jewish ghettos were established in several towns and townships in Generalbezirk Kiev. In Zvenigorodka—2,000 Jews—the ghetto was established in late August.⁸⁰ In Piriatin—some 1,800 Jews—the ghetto was established during August and September. The local military administration established both ghettos in order to exploit Jewish labor, and they continued to exist a few months longer under civil administration.⁸¹ When Generalbezirk Kiev was handed over to civil administration on October 20, 1941, Waldemar Magunia was appointed Generalkommissar. Most of the local Jews had been murdered during the period of military administration. In Generalbezirk Kiev a few thousand Jews were still alive in ghettos and camps during the winter of 1941–42.

GENERALBEZIRK NIKOLAEV

Nikolaev was occupied by the Germans on August 17, 1941, and Kherson on August 19. The Jewish population of Nikolaev numbered some 25,500, and Kherson’s was around 16,500, of whom between one-third and half remained under German occupation. EG D operated in the Nikolaev-Kherson region, and according to the Einsatzgruppen report, the remaining Jewish population of each of these towns stood at about 5,000.⁸² They were murdered on September 14. The town’s military commander reported that, “in accordance with Sipo orders, the Jews of Nikolaev have been evacuated (their execution will follow).”⁸³ A priest from Nikolaev testified that “on the morning of September

14 . . . I witnessed a procession of condemned Jews. . . . The Gestapo, the police, and gendarmerie transferred the Jews . . . to the ravine and shot them.”⁸⁴

On August 29, the military commander in Kherson ordered the execution of 110 (100 Jewish and 10 non-Jewish) hostages, accused of sabotaging telephone lines. On September 6, again, 110 Jewish hostages, including 10 women, were shot. They were accused of maintaining contact with Red Army units still fighting in the vicinity of the town. According to Soviet sources, the 7,000 to 8,000 Kherson Jews concentrated in the ghetto were taken to an antitank trench near the village of Zilinevka, a few kilometers out of town, where between September 23 and 24 they were all murdered. The Einsatzgruppen report dated October 2 said that “the towns of Nikolaev and Kherson were freed of Jews. . . . From September 16 to 30, 22,467 Jews and Communists were executed.”⁸⁵

The Jews from the smaller towns and villages in the region of Nikolaev-Kherson were murdered between September and November 1941. In an operation in mid-September 1941, some 1,700 Jews were murdered in the Kakhovka region on the Dnepr River. East of Kherson, a group of Jews were thrown alive into a dry well 40 meters deep. Hand grenades were then thrown into the well, and these completed the execution.⁸⁶

The town of Pervomaysk, on the banks of the river Bug, was included in Generalbezirk Nikolaev and split in two: Golta, on the western bank of the river, was part of Transnistria and under Romanian control; the rest of the town was annexed to Generalbezirk Nikolaev. On the eve of war, its Jewish population numbered 6,000, with half remaining under German occupation. The town was occupied in late July, and the first murder action took place on September 17. The second, in which 1,500 Jews were murdered, was carried out on December 15; the third action, in which all the remaining Jews were murdered, took place on January 6, 1942. Only 30 artisans were kept alive to serve the German municipal administration.⁸⁷

When Generalbezirk Nikolayev came under civil administration on November 15, 1941, Ewald Oppermann was appointed Generalkommissar. Most of the region’s Jews had been murdered during the period of military administration.

GENERALBEZIRK DNEPROPETROVSK

The Soviet province of Dnepropetrovsk and parts of the Zaporozhe province were included in Generalbezirk Dnepropetrovsk. Dnepropetrovsk, whose prewar Jewish population exceeded 90,000, fell to the Germans on August 25, 1941. An estimated one-third of these remained in the town under German occupation. The mass murder of Jews in Dnepropetrovsk was carried out by

Police Battalion 314, aided by the local Ukrainian police, between October 13 and 16. According to the November 19, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, “Of the remaining 30,000 Jews, approximately 10,000 were shot on October 13, 1941, by a detachment of the Higher SS and Police Leader. . . . Further 1,000 Jews were shot by Einsatzkommando 6. . . . Steps are being taken for the extermination of 1,500 inmates of the provincial lunatic asylum.”⁸⁸

V. Y. Tartakovskaya, a Jewish woman from Dnepropetrovsk, married to a Russian, managed to escape from the murder site:

All the Jews were ordered to gather by the Lux store. It was told that this was being done to organize a ghetto. I collected a few things and went with my two children to the store. There we were formed into a column and led away. . . . When we passed the Jewish cemetery and came to the empty lot next to the railroad, we heard shooting. It was at that point that we realized why we had been brought here. . . . A crowd of several thousand people. . . . Then they started forcing us toward the pits at the end of the lot [. . .] and everywhere screams, shots, and the cries of children.⁸⁹

In concentrating the Jews and transferring them to the murder site, the Ukrainian police were helped by local firefighters. On October 12, members of the police force and firefighters, together with Ukrainian mayor Sokolovsky and a few SS officers, attended an evening briefing in which they were informed that on the night of October 13, 1941, the town’s Jewish population was to be rounded up and transferred to permanent accommodations elsewhere. The people present were told to assist the German authorities in carrying out the transfer. They were divided into two-man teams and given the addresses of Jews. On October 14, firemen were taken to the murder site. Late in the day —after watching the Jews being murdered—they were ordered to cover the bodies with earth. The Jews had been shot in a ravine not far from the local sawmill.⁹⁰

Many Jews in Dnepropetrovsk did not obey the German order and went into hiding. All these Jews were captured over the next few months and murdered. The 1,000 Jews mentioned in the November 19 Einsatzgruppen report were shot after the October 13 action. A further 5,000 were shot in December 1941.⁹¹ A few hundred Jewish artisans and skilled workers were left alive by the German authorities.⁹²

Krivoi-Rog, whose prewar Jewish population numbered around 13,000, fell to the Germans on August 15, 1941. An estimated one-third of the town’s Jews remained under German occupation. The large action, in which the Jews of Krivoi-Rog were murdered, was carried out on October 14 and 15. According to an eyewitness, “On 14 October, 1941 . . . the entire convoy of about 3,000 people

was led to a valley. . . . Adults were shot, while children were thrown alive off the cliff. . . . On October 15, again, 2,000 citizens of the town, along with some 800 prisoners of war, were brought to the same cliff and shot.”⁹³

Most of the Jewish population of the cities, towns, and villages of the province of Dnepropetrovsk had been murdered by March 1942.⁹⁴ In August 1941 hundreds of the Jews of Piatikhatka and neighboring townships were brought to the Glavaogneupor mine, where some were shot and others were thrown alive into the mineshaft.⁹⁵

Zaporozhe, whose prewar Jewish population numbered some 30,000, was conquered on October 4, 1941, together with its 4,000 remaining Jews. The 10 members of the newly founded Jewish council were tortured and executed shortly after its establishment, because they had not obeyed the orders to collect clothing and valuables from the Jews and hand them over to the Germans. The remaining 3,700 Jews were subjected to forced labor in harsh winter conditions. They were murdered on March 24, 1942.⁹⁶

THE MURDER OF JEWISH FARMERS

According to the 1939 population census, some 222,000 Jews, constituting 14.4 percent of the Ukraine’s Jewish community of 1,532,000, lived in rural regions and in kolkhozes. These Jews were dispersed among hundreds of villages, some of which had a tiny Jewish population and others were home to larger Jewish communities.⁹⁷

With the German invasion, some of the Jewish kolkhozes, along with their livestock, were evacuated. In agricultural regions, evacuation usually began later than in cities. Economic considerations guided the decision to evacuate the agricultural sector: the need for a food supply for the army and the civilian population. The relatively late evacuation, however, meant that many farmers, specially west of river Dnepr, were unable to get away after the bridges had been bombed. In those places where crossing was possible, preference was given to troops, military industries, and workers. About half the Jewish farmers west of the Dnepr, including the Jewish National regions of Kalinindorf and Stalinindorf, were forced to remain under German occupation. In the area of Jewish settlements in Ukraine were also kolkhozes inhabited by Volksdeutsche, who had settled in the region during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁸ Some kolkhozes had mixed Jewish, Russian, Ukrainian, and German populations.

The German invaders were surprised to find so many Jewish farmers; this did not conform with their image of the Jews, especially not the Soviet Jews. German propaganda had described Soviet Jewry as being part of society’s ruling

strata, not as simple farming folk. The Einsatzgruppen report of November 12, 1941, tried to adapt the unique phenomenon of the Jewish farmer to the German concept of Soviet Jews:

As an oddity we should like to mention the discovery of Jewish kolkhozes. Between Krivoy-Rog and Dnepropetrovsk there is a considerable number of Jewish kolkhozes which consist of Jews not only as the managers but also as agricultural laborers. As far as we could find out they are Jews of low intelligence who had been found unsuitable for important tasks and “exiled” to the country by the political leaders. In order to be sure work was carried on [without interruption], Einsatzkommando 6 refrained from shooting the Jews in these cases, and was satisfied with the liquidation of the Jewish managers [only], replacing them with Ukrainians.⁹⁹

The lives of Jewish kolkhozniks were spared briefly, but eventually they, too, felt the destructive axe of the murder units. The Germans were helped by Ukrainian and Volksdeutsche farmers in murdering their Jewish neighbors. In areas where no antitank trenches had been dug, the bodies of dead Jews could be disposed of in deep dry wells.

Some 8,000 Jews lived in the district of Kalinindorf, of whom 1,900 inhabited the village of Kalinindorf. The area was conquered in August 1941, and half of the Jewish population remained under German occupation. On September 16, 1941, the Jews of Kalinindorf and its surrounds were taken to an antitank trench where they were shot. The death toll was 1,875. In another antitank trench nearby, 666 Jewish inhabitants of the village of Sterndorf were murdered.¹⁰⁰ According to a Soviet committee inquiry into the murder of the rural Jewish population of the village of Frei Leben (Free Living) in the district of Kalinindorf:

On September 18, in accordance with orders issued by the military commander, all the Jews in the village of Frei Leben were rounded up in the school building, a total of 416 people. They were led to a well about 6 kilometers away from the village of Judendorf, where they were shot and their bodies thrown into the well. The Germans did the shooting and the bodies were thrown into the well by the policemen Vakhka Fedor and Kostiuk Naum.¹⁰¹

And thus in the testimony on the murder of Jews in the kolkhoz Emmes (also known as Zelenopole) in the vicinity of Kalinindorf:

On September 26, 1941, the German occupiers took advantage of an existing water well in number 14 plot, for use as a grave for peaceful Soviet citizens. The perpetrators of these murders were the ss detachment that came from Kalinindorf and the following local inhabitants: P. Sapichek, A. Yarmenko

[there follow the names of eight local policemen]. The aforementioned, together with the Germans, shot to death 112 Jews by the well, men, women, and children, and threw their bodies into the well. . . . The well is 1 meter in diameter and 60 meters deep.¹⁰²

The prewar Jewish population of the Jewish Stalindorf district was around 7,000; 700 of these resided in Stalindorf itself. According to a Soviet report, the county's Jews were at first separated from the remaining inhabitants of the villages in which they lived and later taken away to be shot—altogether 3,911 Jews.¹⁰³ About 2,000 of the murdered Jews had been concentrated in the village of Kotlovi and the kolkhoz Kaganovich, where they were shot.¹⁰⁴ A small ghetto was established in the Jewish kolkhoz Novo-Vitebsk in the county of Sofevka, in which 227 Jews from the kolkhoz and the surrounding area were concentrated. They were employed in road works on the Dnepropetrovsk-Krivoy Rog road until 1942, when they were executed by the Germans. On October 3, 1941, 450 Jews were murdered in the Lenindorf kolkhoz.¹⁰⁵ In the Jewish agricultural settlement of Izrailovka, 400 Jews were murdered by the local police, who also divided the victims' property among themselves.¹⁰⁶

The prewar population of the Jewish National region of Novo-Zlatopol, east of the Dnepr, stood at some 4,700, of whom 1,100 resided in Novo-Zlatopol itself. They were joined by relatives and friends, and people from other agricultural settlements west of the Dnepr who believed that the German advance would stop at the Dnepr. But the German army conquered the region in early October 1941. According to one source, some 2,000 of the region's Jews remained under German occupation.¹⁰⁷ Thus, according to a local inhabitant, on the fate of the Jews of Novo-Zlatopol:

The Jews were ordered to take with them their best clothing and food for the journey. . . . They were taken to the back of the gendarmerie building, told to dig eight pits in the ground, and then [the Germans] began executing them Anyone who objected was thrown into the pits while still alive. Eight hundred people were murdered.¹⁰⁸

Here, too, local police, Ukrainians, and Volksdeutsche participated in the executions.¹⁰⁹ The population of Novo-Zlatopol even included several families of mixed German-Jewish unions. One German family had two sons; one was unmarried and the other was married to a Jewish woman. The married brother was mobilized into the Red Army and sent to the front; his Jewish wife stayed behind with her children. Under German occupation, the unmarried brother volunteered for the local police. When the genocide began, the policeman brother led his Jewish sister-in-law and her children, his nephews and nieces, to their deaths.

The children cried, “Uncle, save us, we don’t want to die!” But their pleas fell on deaf ears.¹¹⁰

The German occupation completely destroyed the Jewish agricultural settlement in the Ukraine. The Germans murdered all the Jewish farmers unable to get away in time. Ukrainian and Volksdeutsche farmers, who had lived side by side with the Jews, were willing participants in the extermination of their neighbors.

I3

Military Administration Areas Ghettos and Extermination

AREAS OF EASTERN BELORUSSIA

Large areas of the occupied Soviet territories, those that were close to the front line—from Leningrad in the north to the Crimea and Caucasus in the south—were under military administration from the first day of occupation and up to the withdrawal of the German army from the region.

The area under military administration included most of eastern Belorussia, including the provinces of Minsk (the eastern part, excluding the towns of Minsk and Slutsk), Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Gomel. Before the war, these areas had been home to more than 200,000 Jews, and according to estimates, over half of them remained under German occupation. These areas were under the control of German Army Group Center. The anti-Jewish actions were carried out by Einsatzgruppe B, police battalions, and other SS forces, as well as local *Schutzmannschaften*.

Vitebsk, whose preoccupation Jewish population numbered some 38,000, was conquered on July 11, 1941, and the number of Jews in the city at that time was around 16,000.¹ According to the Einsatzgruppen report of July 26, some 3,000 Jews registered in a census ordered by the military administration and conducted by the local Jewish council.² The remaining Jews did not register.

During the first few days of occupation, several hundred Jews were murdered by Einsatzkommando 7.³ In late July and early August, the Jewish population of Vitebsk was forced into a ghetto in the northern side of the river Zapadnaia Dvina. Some of the town's Jews were transported to the ghetto on boats, heavily overloaded with women, children, and old people. A number of these boats overturned, spilling their human cargo. Anyone attempting to swim ashore was shot. According to eyewitness accounts, an estimated 2,000 people drowned in the river.⁴ In the beginning of September, the German army handed over 397 Jews, accused of sabotage and of attacking German troops, to Einsatzkommando 9, who executed them.⁵

The ghetto existed for a mere ten to twelve weeks, and between October 8 and 11, 10,000 to 11,000 ghetto inhabitants were taken to the ravine of Ilovskii Ovrage, near the village of Mishkuri, where they were murdered. Following the destruction of the ghetto, searches were made all over the town for Jews in hiding; many were found and shot on the spot.⁶ The Einsatzgruppen report noted: “On October 8, 1941, began the complete liquidation of the Jews in the Vitebsk ghetto owing to the imminent danger of epidemics.”⁷ Another Einsatzgruppen report noted that when the ghetto in Vitebsk was evacuated, “a total of 4,090 Jews of both sexes were shot.”⁸ According to Soviet sources, 13,500 people were murdered in Vitebsk. One of the testimonies attached to the report stated that some 13,000 Jews were forced into the Vitebsk ghetto; of these 5,000 died of starvation and disease, and the remaining 8,000 were shot.⁹

In Borisov, northeast of Minsk, the prewar Jewish population numbered over 10,000. The town was conquered in early July 1941, and very few Jews had managed to escape in time. About 8,000 of the town’s Jews, including refugees, were forced into a ghetto on July 25. The ghetto was destroyed on October 20, 1941, and its inhabitants were shot several kilometers away in Razovevka. The German Oberwachmeister, Soennecken, witnessed the slaughter:

I was on duty in Borisov from Thursday, October 17, to Monday, October 20. As soon as I arrived, I was informed by the Russian police commander Ekho that all the Jews of Borisov, some 8,000 people, were to be shot on the night between Sunday and Monday. . . . The action began at 3 o’clock in the morning. The men were taken out first. . . . They were accompanied to the murder site by the Russian police from Borisov, reinforced by Russian police from Zembina. . . . All this happened in front of civilians and soldiers. . . . The shots could be heard not only from the direction of the forest, but also from within the ghetto and from all the streets in town, because the many Jews escaped from the ghetto and sought refuge in the town. . . . Houses were burning in the ghetto and in the street nearby. . . . Toward evening German soldiers were called in to help and were asked to surround the ghetto in order to stop the Jews escaping. . . . I heard that a large number of Jews committed suicide in the nearby Berezina River.¹⁰

Similar instances of the local police carrying out the killings—whether or not in the presence of members of the Sipo—were quite common in the occupied Soviet territories, especially in the smaller towns and townships. Decisions on conducting murder actions were taken by the Sipo, and it was they who issued orders to the local police forces.

Polotsk, in the county of Vitebsk, had a prewar Jewish community of 6,500. The town fell on July 16, 1941, but the roads leading from it had been blocked

beforehand, leaving around 5,000 in the town. A ghetto was established in late July and early August. In September the ghetto inhabitants were transferred out of town to the village of Lozovka. According to a ghetto inhabitant:

Although it was possible to escape from the ghetto, there was nowhere to escape to. There were still no partisans in the area. . . . On November 21, in the morning, the Germans and the police arrived and removed us from the huts. . . . We couldn't have imagined that we were going to be exterminated. . . . The police ordered us to undress. . . . The Germans shot. . . . The policeman Shastidko, who lived in the same street as I did, saw that I wasn't going in the direction of the pits and shouted out to me, "Why are you standing there, get a move on!" and hit me on the head with a bicycle chain. . . . I started running toward the forest.¹¹

Orsha fell to the Germans on July 16, 1941. Orsha's prewar Jewish population numbered some 8,000, and between half and two-thirds remained under occupation. The ghetto was established in September in about twenty-five houses on Engels Street. A Jewish woman, who had been wandering throughout Belorussia, testified, "I saw the ghetto in Orsha. . . . It was even more terrible than that of Minsk. Freezing old women rummaged among the corpses. Girls, bruised and swollen from hunger, asked: 'When will they come for us?' Death seemed a relief to them."¹² Hauptmann Paul Eick, who served in the military administration in Orsha, testified at his trial in Minsk in January 1946:

I received the order to establish the ghetto from Feldkommandant Oberstleutnant Baron Asheberg. . . . The people who were in the ghetto were shot. . . . The shooting was done under orders of the commander of the SD, Reshke. . . . I allocated soldiers to surround the ghetto. . . . The shooting was carried out in the Jewish cemetery. . . . I allocated ten soldiers to guard the shooting site.¹³

The Orsha ghetto was destroyed in late November.¹⁴ According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, some 6,000 Jews had been murdered in it.¹⁵

Before the Soviet era, the township of Liady in the county of Vitebsk had been an important Hassidic center. On the eve of war, its Jewish population numbered less than 1,000, most of whom were still there when the township was occupied in July 1941. In March 1942 all the inhabitants of the ghetto were taken to the eastern side of the Mereia River and shot.¹⁶

Bobruisk was taken on June 28, 1941, and around 20,000 of the town's original 27,000 strong Jewish population remained under German occupation. According to some sources, about 7,000 Jews were murdered in September 1941 by the SS Cavalry Brigade.¹⁷

Over 2,200 Jews were murdered in Bobruisk between the end of September and the end of October.¹⁸ On October 22, a ghetto was established in the vicinity of the Bobruisk airfield. The ghetto was liquidated about two weeks later, on November 7, 1941, along with its inhabitants. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated December 19, “a total of 5,281 Jews of both sexes were shot. The town of Bobruisk and the nearby area is free of Jews.”¹⁹ This action was carried out by EK 8 and Police battalion 316.²⁰

Mogilev was captured on July 26, 1941. The town’s prewar Jewish population had been around 20,000. In a census in late August 1941, over 6,430 Jews registered; 2,090 were children under 16.²¹ A ghetto was established there at the end of September. About 750 Jews were executed, accused of sabotage and fleeing during the removal to the ghetto.²² Two major killing actions were carried out in Mogilev—the first on October 2 and 3, and the second on October 19, during which the ghetto was destroyed. In the war log of the Police battalion 322, whose units took part in the first of the actions, it says:

On October 2 . . . at 15:30, company 9 . . . together with HQ staff of the Higher ss and Police Leader “Center” and the Ukrainian auxiliary police, carried out an action in the ghetto in Mogilev . . . 65 were shot trying to escape. . . . October 3 . . . Companies 7 and 9 . . . executed 2,208 male and female Jews in a forest outside of Mogilev.²³

The Einsatzgruppen report dated November 14, 1941, described the second killing action:

On October 19, 1941, a large-scale operation against the Jews was carried out in Mogilev with the aid of the Police Regiment “Center.” 3,726 Jews of both sexes and all ages were liquidated by this action. . . . On October 23, 1941, to prevent further acts of sabotage and to combat the partisans, a further number of Jews from Mogilev and surrounding area, 239 of both sexes, were liquidated.²⁴

In the Einsatzgruppen reports and reports issued by other ss and German army units, accusations against the Jews of sabotage, support of partisans, etc., were given as an excuse or justification for their murder.

In Mogilev, 200 skilled Jewish workers were left alive in a “civilian prison camp” (*Zivilgefangenlager*), along with several hundred gentiles, to serve the needs of the German administration. Their families were not spared.²⁵

Gomel, whose prewar Jewish population exceeded 40,000, fell to the Germans on August 19, 1941, almost two months after the start of the invasion. Only 4,000 Jews remained in the town under German occupation. Wide-scale destruction

in the town left no available space for a single continuous ghetto, and the Jews were therefore concentrated in four small ghettos. The major murder operation, in which 2,500 Jews were annihilated, took place on November 4, on the outskirts of town.²⁶ The other Jews had been murdered earlier in the course of smaller actions.²⁷

Apart from the Jewish communities already mentioned, all the Jews living in the towns, townships, and villages in the regions of Belorussia under German military administration were exterminated during the period between the German occupation and February 1942. The Einsatzgruppen report dated December 19, 1941, summed up the activity of Einsatzgruppe B:

Since the Jews in Partichi near Bobruisk . . . had close connections with the partisans, a special action was carried out in the course of which 1,013 Jews and Jewesses were shot. . . . Confidential agents reported that the still numerous partisans in Gomel were aided in every way by the Jews. Consequently, a special action had to be carried out in Gomel, Rogachev, and Korma. Thus a total of 2,365 Jews and Jewesses were shot. Following an action against the partisans which was carried out by the 221st Security Division with the participation of a subunit of Einsatzkommando 9 . . . the Jews of the township Klimovichi and Cherkov . . . proved hostile to Germans and sympathizes with the partisans. Altogether 786 Jews of both sexes were shot. For the same reasons an action had to be carried out in the township of Lyubavichi, in the course of which 492 Jews of both sexes were shot. . . . For reasons of public security and order, several actions had to be carried out in the vicinity of Krichev. A total of 1,213 Jews of both sexes were shot. For the same reasons, special actions were carried out in Roslavl and Shumyachi near Roslavl. A total of 510 Jews of both sexes were shot.²⁸

Many killing actions that were not mentioned in the Einsatzgruppen reports were carried out elsewhere in regions under military administration by other SS forces, especially the German police battalions or by the local police.²⁹

EASTERN UKRAINE

The counties of Chernigov, Sumy, Kharkov, and Stalino (Donetsk), occupied up to the end of 1941, were under the military administration. On the eve of war the total number of Jews living in those regions neared 245,000, of whom, according to estimates, no more than one-quarter remained under German occupation. In Chernigov, the prewar Jewish population numbered 12,000. The city was occupied on September 9. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated November 19, 1941:

On October 23, 1941, a Teilkommando of Sonderkommando 4a arrived in the town of Chernigov. . . . Of more than 10,000 Jews, not more than 260 have stayed behind. . . . The Kommando shot 116 Jews on October 23, 1941, and 144 the following day. The same Kommando again passed through Chernigov on October 29, 1941. Forty-nine Jews were arrested, who, after the executions on October 24, 1941, believed the danger had passed and returned from their flight.³⁰

In the town of Nezhin, southeast of Chernigov, the prewar Jewish population was about 3,000. Some 300 Jews were shot there in November 1941.³¹ A Feldkommandantur 191 report, dated November 20, 1941, noted: "There are no longer any Jews in Nezhin. . . . In the region under the command of the Orstkommandatur of Perecaslav, there are no more Jews. The same applies to the region under the command of the Ortskommandant in Priluki."³² The Jews in the region's other towns and townships were murdered between November 1941 and February 1942.³³

The county of Sumy had a prewar Jewish population of above 14,000, of whom some 4,000 lived in Konotop, 3,900 in Romani, and almost 1,900 in Sumy. The Konotop region was captured in September 1941. During the first half of November 1941, the First ss Infantry Regiment was active in Konotop. According to its November 7, 1941, report, "As part of the purging and calming activity in the town of Konotop, a Feldgendarmerie [military police] unit arrested 153 Jews and executed them on November 1. In the course of routine patrols in the streets of the town, more Jews were caught and brought to the Feldgendarmerie for judgment."³⁴ Soviet documents mentioned the murder of 1,000 Jews in Konotop.³⁵

Sumy was captured on October 10, 1941. Between February 6 and 7, 1942, the town's remaining 350 Jews were taken to a quarry and shot.³⁶ All the remaining Jews in the county's other towns and townships were also murdered, either by the local police alone or with their assistance.³⁷

Kharkov had a prewar Jewish population of 130,000 people. The city fell to the Germans on October 23, 1941, and the number of Jews who remained under occupation is estimated at almost 20,000. Most of these were women, children, the elderly, and the sick. Only 10,271 Jews registered in the population census.³⁸ Owing the relatively late conquest of Kharkov, the overwhelming majority of the Jews escaped or were evacuated. It can be assumed that some information reached them about the tragic fate that awaited them under German occupation. Half of the Jews who remained in the city did not register in the population census, fearing persecution.

In Kharkov a Ukrainian municipal council was established and headed by Professor A. I. Kramarenko. The council's first public announcement was made on November 3, 1941, and included an order to the Jews to select a Jewish council.

“The Jewish Question” was discussed at length at the November 21, 1941, meeting of the municipal council and was summed up in the minutes: “Apart from the chairman of the Jewish council, the Jews have no right to enter the municipality building. All Jews must wear yellow armbands. The Jews will be concentrated in one neighborhood. [We must] draw the attention of the German command to the fact that the population is interested in taking steps against the Jews.”³⁹

Preparations for exterminating the Jews of Kharkov began with the arrival of Sonderkommando 4a. Police battalion 314 also participated in the action, which was carried out under the command of Gerret Korsemann, who replaced Prutzmann as Higher SS and Police Leader for Russia South on January 5, 1942. According to the January 16, 1942, Einsatzgruppen report headed “The Jewish Question in Kharkov,” “In agreement with the authorized army HQ and the Field Kommandatur, preliminary steps to a major action against the Jews are to be taken by SK 4a.”⁴⁰

On December 14, 1941, the city’s military commander published an announcement, ordering all the Jews to move into a ghetto by December 16. The announcement stated that anyone who had not moved to the ghetto would be shot on the spot, and it related also to people who had one Jewish parent and to married couples of whom one was Jewish. The Kharkov ghetto consisted of a series of huts located near a tractor factory, about 12 kilometers out of town. According to the February 4, 1942, Einsatzgruppen report, “The evacuation of the Jews went off without a hitch except for some robberies during the march of the Jews in the direction of their new quarters. Almost without exception, only Ukrainians participated in these robberies.”⁴¹

The conditions under which the Jews of Kharkov were held in the ghetto were inhumane. The executions began in early January, and within a few days all the Jews had been murdered. The executions were carried out in a location known as Drobitski-Yar. S. Krivoruchko, a Jewish engineer who managed to escape, testified about the condition in the ghetto and the extermination action:

For many of the elderly and the handicapped, the journey from the city to the barracks of the tractor factory was the last of their lives. . . . In the room in which I found myself, more than seventy people had arrived by evening, whereas no more than six to eight people would be able to live in it. . . . Some twenty to thirty people a day were dying from hunger. We were also suffering from lack of water. . . . Fortunately for us, there was a snowfall, and we used the snow instead of water. From the dreadful overcrowding, hunger, and lack of water, an epidemic of gastrointestinal diseases broke out. . . . We were permitted to go out of the barracks between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Anyone who went out at any other time was shot on the spot. By morning, the corridors

of the barracks were befouled to an unimaginable degree. Then there began a cleanup by hand, since there were no shovels or brooms, and the Germans threatened us with the firing squad if it wasn't all picked up within an hour. The morning was also the time for removing the bodies of those who had died the night before. . . . On January 2, 1942, at 7 a.m., in the barrack where I was staying, a German sentry shouted out an order for everyone to gather their things and be outside in ten minutes. . . . The German sentries and policemen formed a tight ring around us and announced that we were being evacuated to Poltava. We marched out onto the Chuguyev-Kharkov highway, but then we were directed away from the city, although the road to Poltava ran through town. . . . Two kilometers past the last houses of the tractor factory workers' quarters, they turned us in the direction of a ravine . . . from which were heard occasional shots and the chattering of machine guns.⁴²

It wasn't hard to escape from the ghetto. The problem was where to go. Dozens of people escaped, some of them Jews who had non-Jewish relatives. Testimonies of people who had managed to escape from the ghetto stressed the cruelty of the local Ukrainian policemen who guarded the ghetto. According to a witness, "They broke and amputated fingers in order to take off a ring that did not slip off easily; they used pliers to prize out gold crowns, together with the teeth and pieces of jaw to which they were attached, from the mouths of people who were scared to death."⁴³

According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, some 15,000 Jews were murdered in Drobitski-Yar.⁴⁴ Yordan, a intelligence officer with the Sixth Army, testified at the trial of members of Sonderkommando 4a that 21,685 Jews had been murdered in Kharkov by January 1942.⁴⁵ About 400 elderly and infirm Jews, unable to move into the ghetto, were rounded up in the town's synagogue, where they soon died of hunger and cold.⁴⁶ A significant number of Jews did not obey the order to move to the ghetto and stayed in and around the town. The arrest and execution of these Jews continued throughout the occupation. The Einsatzgruppen report dated April 10, 1942, pointed out that "there are still some Jews in hiding [in Kharkov] in the rural districts as well as in town. . . . The Ukrainians . . . have reported Jews in hiding, or families who housed them; these are being arrested each day. With a few exceptions, the attitude of the population of Kharkov to the Jews is absolutely negative."⁴⁷

Some of the local gentile population benefited from the murder of the Jews. As the Kharkov newspaper, *Nova Ukraina* (New Ukraine), put it, "1,700 families who had formerly lived in cellars [or] whose homes had been burned down when the Judeo-Bolsheviks [were making their] escape, were given new apartments in three of the town's neighborhoods."⁴⁸ The apartments belonging to the Jews

were allocated first to policemen and their families and employees of the local Ukrainian administration.

The county of Stalino had a prewar population of 64,000 Jews, of whom some 25,000 Jews lived in Stalino itself, 10,500 lived in Mariupol, over 5,000 lived in Artemovsk, and the rest lived in dozens of towns and townships throughout the county. The county was in one of the country's industrial areas and part of the important Donbas mining region. Stalino fell to the Germans on October 21, 1941, when the town's remaining Jewish population numbered some 3,000.⁴⁹ According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated March 6, 1942, which focused on activity during February 1942, about 370 Jews were shot in Stalino, and "both the Gorlovka and Makeyevka districts were now free of Jews." Moreover, "the small number [of Jews] who remained in Stalino will be moved [liquidated] as soon as weather conditions permit."⁵⁰ The remaining Jews of Stalino were murdered in the spring of 1942.

Mariupol, on the shores of the Sea of Azov, was captured on October 6, 1941. The occupation came as a surprise, and only a few of its inhabitants managed to escape in time. Between 8,000 and 9,000 Jews remained. Two weeks after its fall, on October 20, 1941, the town's Jews were murdered. Sara Glik, who survived the slaughter, recorded in her diary the events of that fortnight:

October 14. . . . Nine thousand Jews have registered. The rest have left the town or are in hiding. . . .

October 17. It was announced today that everyone who has registered must appear at the assembly points and bring his valuables with him.

October 18. Today Mama, Papa, Basya, and I went to the assembly point and turned in three silver soup spoons and a ring. After that they did not let us leave the yard. . . . It was announced to us that we have to leave the city within two hours. We will have to walk to the nearest collective farm, where we will be settled. . . . All Jewish women married to Russians or Ukrainians can stay in town provided their husbands are with them. If the husband is in the army or absent for any reason, the wife and children have to leave the town. A Russian woman married to a Jew can choose to remain or go with her husband. The children may remain with her.

October 20. . . . The whole community left at 7:00. . . . We had to go 9–10 kilometers and the road was terrible. . . . We were herded toward the trenches which had been dug for the defense of the city. These trenches served . . . for the death of 9,000 Jews. . . . The trenches were filled with people for a half kilometer. Many were still alive and were begging for

another bullet to finish them off. . . . When I regained consciousness it was already twilight. The bodies lying on top of me were still shuddering: the Germans were shooting them again to make doubly sure that the wounded would not be able to leave. . . . Somewhere above the corpses, babies were crying. Most of them had been carried by their mothers and since we were shot in the backs, they had fallen protected by their mothers' bodies . . . buried alive under the corpses. . . . I began to crawl out from underneath the corpses. . . . A small group of people who understood what was happening had jumped, unhurt, into the trench when the shooting began. . . . We set off to seek refuge . . . starting in direction from which we could hear dogs barking. We knocked at one hut, but no one answered. Then we knocked at another and we were driven away. At the third we were given some rags with which to cover ourselves and advised to go into the steppe. We did precisely that.⁵¹

The military commander of Mariupol reported on October 29, 1941, that “8,000 Jews were executed by the SD.”⁵² And the Einsatzgruppen report for October 31, 1941, reported that “the cities of Mariupol and Taganrog are free from Jews.”⁵³

Over 3,000 Jews remained in the town of Artemovsk when it fell to the Germans on October 29, 1941. When, on December 21, a fire broke out in the semi-ruined building belonging to the municipal theater, the town's military commander, Major von Tsobel, announced that the Jews were responsible and ordered them to report on January 9, 1942, at the municipal gardens, for transfer to some remote location. Some 3,000 Jews turned up, and these were crowded into the cellars of several buildings, where they were held for a couple of days with no food or water. They were then taken to an alabaster mine about 2 kilometers out of town, where they were forced into a narrow tunnel, at the end of which was the mine face. Their exit was blocked by a brick wall erected inside the tunnel's entrance and they all starved and suffocated to death. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, appointed to examine the place on October 3, 1943, after the region was liberated:

After the wall was removed, we discovered the rest of the tunnel. . . . At the end of the tunnel was an elliptical cave about 20 meters long and 30 meters wide and 3 or 4 meters high. The cave was full of human corpses, pressed up against each other with their backs to the tunnel's entrance. The corpses were pressed so close to each other that they appeared at first glance to be a single solid form. The last rows of corpses were piled against the first ones and pressed up against the cave wall. . . . Due to the unique conditions in the cave

(dry air, steady low temperatures, porous base) the corpses had undergone a mummification process and most of them had been excellently preserved. . . . It was possible to see on most of the corpses a white arm band on which a Star of David had been painted or stitched, around the left sleeve of their coats. The clothes of some of the corpses were colorful, like the clothes usually worn by gypsies. Most of the corpses were of women and children of various ages. There were also some corpses of handicapped people with crutches and walking sticks. In evaluating the size of the cave and two or three layers of corpses, the committee has determined that there were some 3,000 corpses.⁵⁴

The report also pointed out that an examination revealed that some of the corpses bore signs of gunfire. Presumably, therefore, the people were being shot at as they were forced into the tunnel, and those in the latter rows would have absorbed most of the bullets. The Einsatzgruppen report for March 6, 1942, states that Sonderkommando 4b had executed 1,317 people, of whom 1,224 were Jews, and that “with this action, the district of Artemovsk was also freed of Jews.”⁵⁵

These cruel methods were also used in other parts of the region. A Soviet report on German terrorism in the Stalino district describes the murder of Jews in the town of Enakevo, northeast of Stalino: “The Jewish population of Jenakevo consisted of 555 men, women, and children. . . . The Jews were placed in trucks and taken about 20 kilometers away to the Gorlovka district, where they were thrown alive into a mine shaft, until they died an agonizing death.”⁵⁶ Jews remaining in the other towns and townships of Stalino were also murdered.⁵⁷

Melitopol in the county of Zaporozhe, which fell on October 6, had a prewar Jewish population of over 6,000. Five days later, on October 11, all the town’s Jews were ordered to come and register. From the registration station, the Jews were taken straight to an antitank trench near the bridge at Radiansk and shot. Some 2,000 Jews were shot on that day by Sonderkommando 10a.⁵⁸ The Einsatzgruppen report for October 18, 1941, says that Einsatzgruppe D, of which Sonderkommando 10a was a part, executed 4,091 Jews between October 1 and 15, 1941; this number included the Jews of Melitopol.⁵⁹ According to Soviet sources, the number of murdered numbered between 6,000 and 7,000.⁶⁰

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF THE RUSSIAN REPUBLIC

Up to the end of 1941, the territories of the Russian Republic under German military rule stretched from the outskirts of Leningrad in the north and down to the Crimea and Rostov in the south and included parts of the counties of Leningrad (excluding the city itself), Smolensk, Kalinin, Tula, Moscow (the western parts of the county, not including the city itself), Oriol, Kursk,

and Rostov. These regions had not been a part of the historic Jewish Pale of Settlement, and their Jewish population was therefore sparse as compared with those of Belorussia and the Ukraine. The prewar Jewish population of these regions was between 130,000 and 135,000 (excluding the Crimean peninsula), and most of the Jews inhabited the larger towns and cities. Since the majority of these areas were conquered later, after the Germans had already taken Belorussia and the Ukraine, most of the Jews were evacuated or they escaped. According to the Einsatzgruppen report of September 4, 1941, "The Jews . . . have managed to escape the German armies and go east. . . . It is, therefore, hardly possible at present to continue the number of liquidations on the same scale as before, since the Jewish elements are to a great extent missing."⁶¹

Sonderkommando 1b operated throughout the county of Leningrad, where the prewar Jewish population in the towns and townships (excluding that of the city of Leningrad itself) had been around 13,000. Most of the population was evacuated in time, but those Jews who remained were murdered. A local partisan group reported to its Moscow headquarters that "in the county of Leningrad, the Jewish population has been annihilated."⁶² In Pskov, which was captured on July 9, 1941, the prewar Jewish population was a little over 1,000, and half of these remained under occupation. In January 1942 the Germans took these Jews to the nearby Vabolin heights and Ragozin forest and shot them.⁶³

The town of Staraia Russa, which was captured on August 9, 1941, had a prewar Jewish population of almost 900. According to Soviet documents, some 2,000 Jews were arrested there during the second half of September 1941 and placed in a prison and an adjoining monastery. A few days later, all the Jews were shot.⁶⁴ The numerical discrepancy is explained by the fact that the victims included refugees from the Baltic states and Belorussia, caught up by the German army in Staraia Russa.

The township Pushkin, a few kilometers south of Leningrad, was captured on September 17, 1941. According to a Soviet report, the town's 250 Jews were taken to the Ekaterino Palace, where they murdered and buried in a trench in the palace gardens.⁶⁵

In Pavlovsk, near Pushkin, dozens of Jews were murdered in the palace cellars and gardens.⁶⁶ Several dozen Jewish women, children, and old people from the town of Vyritsa, south of Pavlovsk, were taken to a nearby forest and shot; their bodies were then thrown into a pile of snow. The corpses were found by local inhabitants the following spring, when the snows melted.⁶⁷ In the village of Durbrovka, near Petrodvorets, east of Leningrad, the Germans forced eleven Jews into a bathhouse and set it on fire.⁶⁸ These cases are but a sample of the way the Germans treated Jews in hundreds of small towns and villages throughout the occupied

Soviet territories. The German military administration, under whose command these regions were placed, together with the ss authorities and local police forces, did everything in their power to catch Jews and to exterminate them.

The town of Nevel, in the county of Kalinin, was taken on July 15, 1941. About 1,000 of the town's original 3,000 Jews remained under German occupation. On August 6 and 7, the Germans ordered the Jews, via the mayor and the local police, to move to a ghetto out of town, in a place called Golubaia-Dacha. According to a former partisan woman, Savoika Starna:

A youth arrived at the ghetto from Vitebsk, telling that in Vitebsk all the Jews had been shot. . . . Members of the Jewish council caught him and asked, 'Why are you spreading rumors and causing panic? Why are you lying? . . . People did not believe that they would be killed. . . . It was possible to escape, but there was nowhere to escape to, there were still no partisans. . . . Most people's logic was "if we run away — they'll kill us, if we stay — maybe we'll manage to survive."⁶⁹

About 800 Jews were shot on September 6, 1941, in a trench close to Golubaia-Dacha, and 200 were shot in the town's Pyatino area.⁷⁰ According to the Einsatzgruppen report of September 23, 1941, in Nevel "scabies broke out. . . . In order to prevent further contagion . . . 640 Jews were liquidated and the houses burned down."⁷¹ The town of Kalinin, whose prewar Jewish community numbered around 2,400, most of whom had been evacuated, was captured only on October 17, 1941. According to a Soviet report, over 400 of the town's citizens were murdered,⁷² and it is feasible that most of them were Jews. The Soviet army liberated Kalinin on December 16, 1941.

All 50 of the Jews remaining in Velikie-Luki, in the Kalinin county, whose prewar Jewish population numbered over 1,500, were murdered.⁷³ The town of Toropets, with its prewar Jewish population of 500, fell at the end of August. Only a quarter to a third of the Jews remained under occupation, and these were murdered in late October or early November 1941.⁷⁴

Smolensk had a prewar Jewish population of some 15,000. The city's western side was captured on July 16, 1941, and the side east of the Dnepr fell on July 29. About 2,000 remaining local Jews, together with several hundred Jewish refugees from Belorussia, were forced into a ghetto in the remote Sadki suburb in late August and early September 1941. The women and few remaining men were employed in cleaning out train carriages that had transported wounded German soldiers, cleaning streets, etc.⁷⁵ The city's Jewish council was headed by Dr. Feinsohn, who had been appointed by the Germans. The Smolensk ghetto survived until June 1942.

Rudnia, in the county of Smolensk, had a prewar Jewish community of some 1,700, of whom 1,200 were forced into a ghetto. On October 21, 1941, about 1,000 Jews, including the entire population of the neighboring Jewish kolkhoz Put' k'sotsializmu (the road to socialism), were taken to an antitank trench near the town and shot. About 200 artisans remained in the town until November 24, when they, too, were shot.⁷⁶

In the town of Khislavichi in Smolensk county, about 1,000 Jews, out of the town's 1,500 prewar Jewish population, were forced into a ghetto in August 1941. In October, 150 men were taken from the ghetto and murdered on the outskirts of town. In early March 1942, the remaining 800 Jews were murdered.⁷⁷ The entire Jewish population in other towns of the county of Smolensk was annihilated.

Only a few dozen Jews remained in Ruza, a town west of Moscow, which fell to the Germans in early November 1941. According to a Soviet army report dated January 17, 1942: "In four houses where 16–18 Jews lived they were shot in their rooms. . . . A hanging post was erected in the town square and three partisans, two of them Russians and one Jew, were hanged."⁷⁸ The Jews in Ruza were murdered by local police.⁷⁹ Small groups of Jews were murdered in other parts of the county of Moscow.⁸⁰

The town Kaluga was captured on October 13, 1941; of the 800 Jews who lived there before the war, about 150 remained under German occupation. The Jews were forced into a ghetto in early November, and M. N. Frankel was appointed to the position of Jewish "Starosta," or community elder. The German occupation of Kaluga lasted only two and a half months, until the town was liberated on December 30, 1941, and some of the Jews survived. Following liberation, Frankel submitted a report to the Soviet authorities regarding the fate of the Jews in occupied Kaluga:

The Germans forced Jews, including children and old people, to do hard physical labor. . . . On November 27, a German officer announced that every tenth person will be shot if 100 people do not turn up for work the following day. There were only 154 Jews in Kaluga. . . . Only 35 to 40 people were capable of reporting for work, including children and old people. . . . They supplied no food. . . . As they withdrew on December 21, 1941, the Germans set alight the Jewish homes. . . . Many Jews who tried to save themselves from the fire were shot, killed, and burned.⁸¹

As part of its attack on Moscow in late October 1941, the German army captured most of the southern areas of the county of Tula, excluding the town Tula. Fewer than 6,000 Jews lived in the entire county of Tula, half of them in the town itself. The German occupation of the Tula region lasted only about six weeks,

and the Germans were pushed out of most of the county in December 1941. Although the Jewish population in the region was small, the German authorities and Sonderkommando 7b spared no effort in seeking out every last Jew.

Southwest of Tula, the Germans murdered the only Jewish family in the township of Plavsk—10 people altogether, including 5 children between the ages of 4 months and 11 years.⁸² All the villages in the area were combed for Jews who, if caught, were murdered. This happened under extremely harsh weather conditions, in proximity to the front, and under a deteriorating military situation caused by the Soviet counterattack and the German army's withdrawal. The hunt and murder of the very last Jews was to a large extent dependent on the local Ortskommandanturs. Without the active participation of the army, the small subunits of Sonderkommando 7b could not have carried out the murders.⁸³

The county of Orel had a prewar Jewish population numbering around 33,000. The three larger concentrations of Jews were in the towns of Orel (over 3,000 Jews, prewar), Briansk (a little over 5,000), and Klinty, formerly part of the Pale of Settlement (6,500). Orel fell to the Germans on October 3, 1941, and according to the December 10, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, "The entire Jewish population left this area. The number of Jews who lived here was, in any case, very small."⁸⁴ Nonetheless, some Jews had remained in Orel, and the December 19 Einsatzgruppen report mentions that people, "among them several Jews," had been caught committing arson.⁸⁵ Dozens of Jewish families were transferred to a prisoner of war camp in Orel, where they were housed in Block 1 together with communist activists, commissars, and captured partisans. This block was known as "death block," and on Wednesdays and Fridays, groups of six to eight prisoners were taken out to be shot. In the autumn of 1942 the last group of Jews was removed from Block 1 and taken out of town to the Medvedevskii forest, where they were shot.⁸⁶

The town of Briansk was captured on October 6, 1941, and according to the Einsatzgruppen report dated November 14, 1941, "The Jewish population, as well as the Communist Party members and the skilled workers, however, have all escaped, as far as could be ascertained."⁸⁷ But some Jews had in fact remained in the town, and a Soviet report described the discovery of fourteen pits on the road to Karachev containing "the bodies of 7,500 old people, women, and children, most of them members of the Jewish community and gypsies."⁸⁸

Jewish communities ranging between several hundred and several thousand people existed in all the towns and townships in the west of Orel county, Klinty, Nobozybkov, and dozens of other settlements included in the former Pale of Settlement. In Klinty, some 3,000 Jews were murdered in December 1941. The Soviet report on the murders, which was based on eyewitness accounts, men-

tioned the murder of children, who “were usually not shot. They were stood in a row at the edge of the trench and hit on the head with the Germans’ rifle butts. They were then pushed into the trench and buried while still alive. Babies were killed by having their heads smashed against a pine tree or against each other, before being thrown into the pit. There were descriptions of Germans hurling babies up over the trench and shooting them in the air.”⁸⁹ During October and November 1941, Sonderkommando 7b was active in the regions of Orel, Briansk, and Klinty.

Novozybkov had a prewar Jewish community numbering over 3,000. According to a Soviet report, several pits containing 2,860 corpses were discovered in the Karkhovsk forest near the town’s railway station. According to the report, the “largest of the pits was full of the corpses of Jews.”⁹⁰ Between September 1941 and March 1942, Jews were murdered in other towns and townships in the western part of Orel.⁹¹ The prewar Jewish population of Kursk county numbered around 6,500. Some 5,000 of these lived in the city of Kursk, which fell on November 4, 1941. Around 500 remaining Jews were murdered several weeks later.⁹²

In the town of Belgorod, which was captured on October 24, 1941, the prewar Jewish population was around 650. On February 5, 1942, the town’s remaining 60 Jews were taken out into the freezing cold. They were sent, naked, into a warehouse. The Germans shot rounds of machine-gun fire into the warehouse before setting it alight, and people were burnt alive.⁹³

The prewar Jewish population in the county of Rostov on the Don exceeded 32,000, of whom more than 27,000 resided in the town of Rostov. The Germans captured Rostov on November 21, 1941, but on November 29, the town was liberated in a counterattack by the Red Army. During this brief period, the Germans did not manage to conduct their anti-Jewish activity. The second largest town in the county, Taganrog, with its Jewish population of above 3,000, was captured on October 17, 1941. On October 26, the Jews were ordered by the town’s military commander to bring food and valuables to Vladimirovsk Square. All the money, valuables, and food brought by the 1,800 Jews were confiscated, and the Jews were led to a place called Petrushina-kosa, where they were murdered by Sonderkommando 10a, which was active in the Taganrog region.⁹⁴

The Red Army’s winter counterattack liberated extensive regions under the occupation of German Army Group Center. In two small ghettos in Smolensk county, Velizh and Usviaty, the Soviet army succeeded in rescuing some Jews. The Velizh ghetto had been established in October and November 1941 and contained about 1,500 of the some 1,800 pre-occupation Jewish community. Some of the ghetto Jews were accommodated in houses, and others were in a long pigpen. As the Soviet army advanced toward the town in early February 1942, German

soldiers, with local police, surrounded and burned the pigpen before setting fire to the remaining houses in the ghetto. People burst out of the sealed-up doors and windows as German soldiers and police shot at them. Of the hundreds of Jews who had lived in the pigpen, only about 25 escaped alive; the others were shot or burned to death. As they withdrew, the German soldiers set fire to the town's remaining houses. Of the Jews who had not been quartered in the pigpen, several hundred survived.⁹⁵

In the town of Usviaty, over 100 Jews remained under German occupation, and they were all forced into a small ghetto. Five young Jewish members of the Komsomol were executed by firing squad after being betrayed by a teacher at their school. Eighty Jews were removed from the ghetto on November 7 and shot. The Red Army liberated the town on January 28, 1942, before the Germans had time to murder the ghetto's remaining 25 Jews.⁹⁶ Except for the region of Transnistria, the only places in the German-occupied Soviet territories where early liberation by the Red Army resulted in the rescue of some of the few remaining Jews were Velizh, Usviaty, and Kursk.

I4

Extermination of the Jews of Crimea

THE JEWISH POPULATION OF CRIMEA

The German Eleventh Army took control of the town of Krasnoperekop on the strip of land between the Ukraine and Crimea on October 30, 1941, and with the fall of Kerch, on November 16, 1941, the occupation of the Crimean peninsula—except of Sevastopol—was complete.

Some 65,000 Jews lived in the Crimea before the German invasion of the Soviet Union.¹ This number included about 7,000 Krimchaks.² Some 6,500 of the Soviet Union's 9,000 Karaites lived in the Crimea.³ The Krimchaks and Karaites did not share a common language, but their dialects and culture were similar to those of the indigenous Tatars.

Evacuation of the Soviet population from the Crimea was carried out under especially difficult conditions. Land routes had been severed before the capture of the peninsula, and any possibility of escape by sea was very limited due to a lack of ships and the fact that preference was given to the military. An estimated 45,000 Jews remained in the Crimea under German occupation, including Krimchaks, and approximately 5,000 Jewish refugees from southern Ukraine and Bessarabia, whose flight from the Germans brought them to the Crimea.

GERMAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE KARAITES AND KRIMCHAKS

In the course of their murder actions, the German authorities had to decide whether they were to view the Karaites and the Krimchaks as Jews and annihilate them. Since the Einsatzgruppen were unable at first to distinguish between the Karaites and the Jews, in Kiev and other parts of the Ukraine Karaites

were murdered as Jews.⁴ Paul Zapp, commander of SK 11a, testified, “In Kherson, I found among the population people that do not belong racially to the Jews, but as a religious sect, they belong to the religion of Moses. Since I was unable to decide whether or not these were Jewish groups, and thus are included in the Führer’s orders, I reported the matter to the Einsatzgruppen HQ.”⁵

The question of the Karaites had already been raised in Germany before the war. Following the Nuremberg laws, representatives of Germany’s small Karaite community asked the authorities for exclusion from these laws, basing their request on the fact that their status in czarist Russia differentiated them from the Jews and that they were not of Jewish origin. After an investigation, the request was passed on to the Reich Office for Genealogical Research (Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung). In his reply on January 5, 1939, the head of this office wrote that “the Karaite sect is not considered a Jewish religious community [Jüdische Religionsgemeinschaft]. But it is impossible to determine that, as a group, the Karaites belong to another race.”⁶

This reply did not determine unequivocally that, racially, the Karaites did not belong to the Jewish race. The German civil administration in the occupied Soviet territories conducted its own investigation of the Karaites’ racial affiliation. The center of the 1,200 strong Karaite community in Lithuania was located in the township of Trakai. In late August 1941 the Generalkommissar in Lithuania, Adrian von Rentlen, dispatched a team of officials from his office to meet Karaite leaders and examine the matter. At this meeting, the Karaite spiritual leader, Sharya Shafshal, provided the German officials with the history of the Karaite religion and showed them documents to prove that they were not of Jewish origin but of Turkish-Tartar origin. The German officials were convinced, and a report to von Rentlen dated September 1, 1941, stated, “The Karaites . . . both in the eyes of the Turks and of the Soviets are included in the Turkish races and not in the Jewish race.”⁷ Von Rentlen passed this report to the Gebietskommissars subordinate to him: “According to the attached report, the Karaites are not to be compared with the Jews.”⁸ The report was furthered to Reichskommissariat Ostland and, from there, to the Ministry for Eastern Occupied Territories. Georg Leibbrandt, head of the Ministry’s Political Department, issued a general directive regarding the Karaites:

The treatment of the Karaites should be in accordance with the decision of the Reich Office for Genealogical Research, dated January 5, 1939. This decision has arranged only the issue of whether the Karaites belong to the Jewish religious community. . . . Thus I request first and foremost that this be seen as a general decision vis-à-vis the categorization of the Karaites, which results from differentiating the Karaites from the Jewish religious community.⁹

In 1942, the Germans asked some Jewish historians in the Vilnius, Warsaw, and Lvov ghettos to submit papers on the ethnic origin of the Karaites. In order to protect them from the fate of the Jews, the historians usually stressed that the Karaites were of Turkish-Tartar origin.¹⁰

As far as the Germans were concerned, therefore, the Karaites in the occupied Soviet territories belonged to the Turkish-Tartar ethnic group and were spared the fate of their Jewish brethren. In reaching this conclusion, the Germans were influenced by their favorable attitude toward the Crimean Tatars, who collaborated with them, and by the close relationship between the Tatars and the Karaites.¹¹ The Karaites, in turn, tried to justify Germany's favorable attitude by serving in the Tartar battalions of the German army and police.¹² According to the December 5, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report:

The question concerning non-Jewish inhabitants of Jewish faith was clarified when the question of the Karaites and the Krimchaks was dealt with. The following facts were established:

According to their own testimony, the Karaites have nothing in common with the Jews apart from their religion. They are said to originate from a group of Mongols who lived in former times around the Black Sea. The Karaites had, contrary to the Jews, full citizens' rights during the time of the czar. . . . The Krimchaks are Jews who emigrated from Italy about 400 years ago. They arrived in the Crimea and adopted the Tartar language.¹³

The Germans categorized the Krimchaks as Jews, and so their fate was the same. The largest Krimchak communities in the Crimea lived in Simferopol and Karasubazar.

MURDER OF THE URBAN JEWS

After Germany's decision that the Karaites were not to be considered Jews, Crimea's Jewish population, against whom the German extermination machine was directed, numbered between 35,000 and 40,000. Most of the Crimea's Jews were murdered between mid-November and the end of December 1941. The murder operations were carried out by Sonderkommando 11a, Sonderkommando 11b, and Sonderkommando 10b, with the assistance of local police, consisting of Russians and Ukrainians, together with volunteer Tatar self-defense units, organized by the Einsatzgruppen.¹⁴ According to the testimony of Dr. Werner Braune, commander of Sonderkommando 11b, the Eleventh Army command ordered that the executions of Simferopol Jews—the largest Jewish community in the Crimea—be completed by Christmas.¹⁵ This order applied to all the Jews

of the Crimea. In a November 1941 directive, von Manstein, commander of the Eleventh Army, pointed out to his men that the Jews were the link between the enemy in the rear area and the Red Army. He stressed the need to do away with the Judeo-Bolshevist regime once and for all.¹⁶

Simferopol, whose prewar Jewish population exceeded 23,000, was taken by the Germans on November 1, 1941. According to the report of Feldkommandantur 853/1, dated November 14, 1941, "an action is taking place against the town's remaining 11,000 Jews, by the Sipo forces."¹⁷ According a census carried out by the Jewish council, the Jewish population of Simferopol with the onset of German occupation numbered 14,000, including some 1,500 Krimchaks and Jewish refugees from Kherson and Dnepropetrovsk and Jews from the rural Jewish communities of Larindorf and Freidorf and the Yevpatoria region.¹⁸ Since not all the Jews were recorded in the census, it is feasible to assume that their number was more than 14,000.

On December 6, 1941, all the town's Jews were ordered to gather in the neighborhood which had previously housed the institute of medicine. The Jews were informed that they were to be relocated to a ghetto and that they were to take with them enough food and clothes for eight days.¹⁹ More than 12,000 Jews, including the Krimchaks, gathered at the designated spot on December 10. Several Jews who had not reported on time were caught and hung in the city streets, with a banner on their chests reading, "For not reporting on time."²⁰ Between December 11 and 13, the Jews were shot beside an antitank trench about 10 kilometers out of town, on the western side of the road leading to Feodosia.²¹ Jews who had not reported were later caught and shot. According to the February 19, 1942, Einsatzgruppen report on the murder of the Jews of Simferopol and the Jews who were caught and shot after the action by Einsatzkommando 11, "The search for isolated Jews who, up to now, have avoided being shot, by hiding or giving false personal data, was continued. From January 9 to February 15, more than 300 Jews were arrested in Simferopol and executed. With this the number of persons executed in Simferopol increased to almost 10,000 Jews."²²

Yevpatoria, in the western Crimea, which had a prewar Jewish population of some 4,500, was captured on October 31, 1941. Only 750 Jews registered in the official census.²³ On November 23, the Jews were taken to an antitank trench near the freight railway station (Tovarni voksal), where they were shot. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, 650 Jews were shot that day; 150 Krimchak Jews were murdered a few days later.²⁴

Feodosia, which had a prewar Jewish population of some 3,000, fell on November 3, 1941. According to a report published by the town's military commander, 1,052 Jews registered in a population census. This number did not

include the Krimchaks, who were to be registered separately.²⁵ A directive was posted in the streets of the town on November 27, signed by the commander of Sonderkommando 10b, according to which “all the town’s Jews are to report on December 1, 1941, between 8–12 a.m. at the entrance to Sennaia Square, for resettlement. . . . The penalty for not complying with this order is death.”²⁶

The Jews were told they were to be sent to the Ukraine, and on December 4, 1941, some 2,000 people were taken to an antitank trench near the “Mechanic” factory, where they were shot.²⁷ The Krimchak Jews were not required to report on November 27, but a decree was posted on December 10, this time on behalf of the municipality, calling on “all the Krimchaks residing in Feodosia to report on December 12, 1941, between 8–12 a.m. to Sennaia Square, for resettlement. . . . The penalty for not complying is death.”²⁸ The 500 Krimchaks who turned up at the designated spot were taken to the same antitank trench to which the Jews had been led a few days earlier and shot.

In Karasubazar lived 468 Krimchaks. On January 17 and 18, they were all put to death in gas vans and buried near the sovkhos Mariano.²⁹ About 1,000 Jews were brought from the surrounding area and murdered in Karasubazar.³⁰

Kerch, whose prewar Jewish population numbered around 6,000, was captured on November 16, 1941. Several thousand Jewish refugees from the Ukraine and other regions in the Crimea had reached Kerch, in the hope of crossing the Straits of Kerch and making their way to southern Russia. Only a few succeeded, since the evacuation program gave preference to military forces.

According to a report of the military administration in Kerch, between 10,000 and 12,000 Jews registered in the population census.³¹ A decree was posted on November 28, 1941, calling on all the Jews to report the following morning between 8 a.m. and noon at Sennaia Square, with food for three days. About 7,000 turned up as ordered, believing that they were being sent to work. The Jews were taken to the municipal prison and, on December 1, a three-day operation began in which they were driven to an antitank trench near the village of Bagrovo, about 4 kilometers west of Kerch, where they were shot.³² One survivor, Yosef Weingartner, testified:

We were brought to the prison. . . . Toward evening, the commander of the prison arrived. “Citizens, there is no reason to be upset. . . . Tomorrow we’ll take you to collective farms to work.” The people calmed down. . . . The next morning five trucks drove to the prison. . . . Great was the shoving and pushing. . . . The people wanted to get out of the prison as soon as possible and find freedom in the collective farms. . . . The trucks kept coming back for new passengers all day. That night, someone remarked that it was strange that the truck needed only twenty-five minutes for a round trip. Where could they take

the people in such a short period? This was such a startling thought that we were all seized by horror. We spent a miserable night. . . . In the morning, the trucks came again. . . . I sensed that something was wrong as soon as we left the town. Before I managed to think things over, I saw a mountain of clothing and the antitank trenches. . . . We found ourselves surrounded by soldiers pointing rifles at us. . . . They began to herd us toward the pit, directly toward the bodies of the people. . . . At that moment shots rang out. . . . I said goodbye to my wife. As we stood embracing each other, a bullet struck her in the head and her blood spurted in my face. . . . I lay unconscious for a long time. . . . Suddenly I opened my eyes and saw the stars gleaming. . . . I crawled out of the pit and set out in a random direction.³³

After the murders, the Sipo posted a decree addressed to those Jews who had not reported as ordered: "All Jews still residing in Kerch and its surrounds, are required to report immediately to No. 2 Karl Liebknecht Street. Any inhabitants who know of the whereabouts of Jews are required to inform the German Sipo. Punishment for breach of this order is death by shooting."³⁴

Many Jews were subsequently caught and executed.³⁵ The Krimchaks were not murdered along with the town's Jews. For them, the Germans planned a separate killing action, but the town was liberated by the Soviet army before they had had a chance to carry it out. Nonetheless, the town's remaining Krimchaks were murdered during the second German occupation (on June 22, 1942).³⁶

In Kerch, the German army was also involved in the murder of Jews. A report sent by the town's Ortskommandatur to Feldkommandatur 553, said, "The extermination of some 2,500 Jews was carried out on December 1 to 3. It will be necessary to conduct an additional action, since some of the Jewish population escaped or went into hiding and it is essential that these people be found."³⁷ This report emphasizes the military administration policy and determination to find and exterminate, to a man, the entire Jewish population.

According to the January 2, 1942, Einsatzgruppen report, "Simferopol, Yevpatoria, Alushta, Karasubazar, Kerch, Feodosya, and other districts of Crimea are free of Jews. From November 16 to December 15, 1941, 17,645 Jews, 2,504 Krimchaks, 824 Gypsies, and 212 Communists and partisans have been shot."³⁸

Yalta, whose prewar Jewish population exceeded 2,000, fell to the Germans on November 8, 1941. On December 5, the town's Jews were placed in a ghetto on a former army base. On December 18, 1941, the ghetto Jews were taken to a gulch (gulch number 4), and some 1,500 people were shot by Sonderkommando 11A.³⁹

Some 1,400 Jews lived in Dzhankoi on the eve of the war. The Jews remaining under occupation were concentrated in one of the town's camps. According to

a report of the rear army command of the Eleventh Army (Koruck 553), dated January 1, 1942:

In accordance with the report of the Ortskommandant of Dzhankoi, the camp is riddled with hunger and imminent outbreaks of epidemics. The camp must, therefore, be liquidated. The SD refused to do this, claiming that it does not have the necessary manpower, and demands that the work be carried out by field gendarmes. In principle, such missions had not been carried out by field gendarmerie. Only after we agreed to supply gendarmes to blockade the area did the SD commander issue an order to carry out the action. It will probably be carried out on January 2.⁴⁰

This report emphasizes, once again, the involvement of the army in the murder of Jews. According to one testimony, 720 Jews were murdered in Dzhankoi. An additional 110 Jews were brought in from the rural council of Patendorf and murdered, as well as 112 from kolkhoz Freifeld in the Telman district.⁴¹

EXTERMINATION OF THE RURAL JEWISH POPULATION

The Crimea had a large rural Jewish population, numbering some 17,000 people (about 5,000 families), and constituting 28 percent of the country's total Jewish population.⁴² Most of the kolkhozes were concentrated in the two Jewish national districts of Larindorf and Freidorf, although there was also a concentration of kolkhozes in the region of Simferopol. Those kolkhozes in which Jews lived were also home to Russians, Ukrainians, and Tartars.

The extermination of the rural Jewish population was carried out between November 1941 and March 1942. Even before this, the Jews had been dispossessed of their livestock and field crops, and they were starved. In identifying and exterminating the Jews who were scattered in dozens of villages throughout the Crimea, the Germans enjoyed the full cooperation of village leaders, local police, and some of the villagers, who subsequently inherited the lands and the property left behind by the Jews.

The Einsatzgruppe subunit involved in murdering the village Jews consisted of only 10 to 20 people, and these were helped everywhere by local police and collaborators. The Jews of the Freidorf district were murdered during November and the first half of December 1941.

In the village of Perets-feld, a German punishment unit appeared on November 15, 1941, with 10 people under the command of an officer . . . 103 people of Jewish nationality were banished to the clubhouse. Later, the fascist monsters

expelled the people to a farm 3 kilometers away from Perets-feld, where they shot them all. Their bodies were thrown into a dry well about 90 meters deep. . . . In the village of Friling, 7 local Jews were shot to death. . . . On November 23, 1941, a car arrived at the village of Amansha, in the rural council of Kadish, with 8 or 9 Gestapo men. They gathered together 183–200 Jews, took them to a dry well, about a kilometer out of the village, shot them, and threw their bodies into the well. . . . In the village of Munus Yevreiski, in the Kadish rural council, all 104 of the village's Jews were gathered on November 23, 1941. They were shot and their bodies thrown into a disused well. . . . The Germans pulled children out of their mothers' arms and threw them alive into the well. . . . In the village of Naibrot in the rural council of Staroburnak, the village's 26 Jews were shot in November 1941. . . . In the village of Freidorf, a German unit executed 64 Jews on November 21, 1941, and threw their bodies into a well 800 meters away. . . . In the village of Buzul-Montanai, in the Takil rural council, all 141 Jews were gathered together on December 7, 1941, and shot next to a well, near Freidorf. The bodies were thrown into the well. In the village of Kary, in the Oteshsk rural council, between November and December 1941, all 136 of the village's Jews were shot near the flour mill, and their bodies were thrown into a well. . . . Based on a thorough investigation, the committee has determined that in the period under German occupation, 854 Jews were murdered in the district of Freidorf and 600 others [non-Jews] were banished to Germany. . . . All the murders were carried out by the same punishment unit.⁴³

The end of the document lists the people accused of murder in the rural council of Freidorf, including the local police commander, Kalashnik, head of the Perets-feld village, Kolodin, head of the Naibrot village, Sheglov, and head of the Friling village, Alexanov. The district of Yevpatoria also had a concentration of Jewish kolkhozes. According to the report of a Soviet committee that investigated Nazi war crimes in that district:

A large number of people from the district, men, women, old people, and children from the villages were banished to Yevpatoria by the German hangmen and shot to death in Krasna Gorka, along with inhabitants of the town. In the following kolkhozes: Ikor, im. Shumiana, Kolvirtnik, Kaganovich, Molotov, Krasnii-Kavkaz, Kalinin, and in the Karaev rural council—the fascist animals executed the entire Jewish population. In the Ikor kolkhoz the Germans took all the Jews 2 kilometers out of the village and, in a place known as Karchi, they shot them all. . . . The bodies were thrown into a deep well. . . . Many people were thrown into the well while they were still alive. Using a similar

method [the Germans] shot 41 people in Naidorf kolkhoz and in Molotov kolkhoz 46 people, and 19 people were shot in Karaev. The bodies of 97 old people, women, and children were found in a grave in Shumiana kolkhoz. . . . They were shot on March 4, 1942.⁴⁴

The murder action in the Molotov kolkhoz, as reported by the Soviet committee of inquiry:

Twenty-one people found a hiding place in a pit dug in the prairie, where they survived for some months. Some of them would return to the village to pick up food. The village head organized [on his initiative] a group of men, who laid an ambush next to the home of the woman, Bereziuk, to whom [the Jews] would come for food, and caught them. In the morning they informed the Romanians who came and beat [the Jews] so that these would reveal their hiding place. [The Romanians] got this information out of them, arrested the people in the hiding place, took them to the village of Bogai, and murdered them cruelly.⁴⁵

Similar occurrences took place in the Ikor kolkhoz and other places.⁴⁶ A Soviet committee of inquiry described the murder of Jews in the kolkhozes in the Kolai district, southeast of Dzhanikoi:

In early February 1942 . . . all the Jews of the village of Maifeld and kolkhozes Sverdlov, Nai-Veg, Friling, FreiLeben, Oktiabr, Spartak, Amikdar, and Kalinin, a total of over 1,000 people, were concentrated in the Maifeld village schoolhouse. Most of the people were women, children, and old people. . . . Later, groups were taken out to an antitank trench in the vineyard, where they were shot. . . . There were incidents in which the German monsters threw live babies into the antitank trench, and they were buried thus.⁴⁷

In the kolkhozes in the district of Saki, southeast of Yevpatoria, according to the Soviet committee of inquiry, 529 Jews were murdered there.⁴⁸

The national Jewish district of Larindorf was located in the area east of Simferopol. Available data on the extermination in this region is limited and relates only to kolkhozes in which the population was mixed, and there were eyewitnesses to the murders. In those kolkhozes with Jewish-only populations, no one survived to tell the tale. A Soviet committee of inquiry into events in the Larindorf district describes the murder of 370 Jews in the villages of Sverdlovka, Kamenka, Frunze, Lekert, Der Emes, and Yiddendorf.⁴⁹

In January 1942 Jews were brought to the district town of Stari-Krim from surrounding townships before being shot. A total of 895 were murdered in the district, of whom 667 alone were in Stari-Krim.⁵⁰ According to the January 9,

1942, Einsatzgruppen report, which focused on the murder of rural Jews, “The operational areas of the Teilkommandos, particularly in smaller villages, were made free of Jews. During the period covered by the report, 3,167 Jews . . . were shot.”⁵¹ This report focuses on the second part of December 1941, when extermination of village Jews was just beginning. The Einsatzgruppen reports for the period between January 15 and 31, 1942, claim the murder of 3,286 Jews in the Crimea. During the period between February 1 and 15, a reported 920 Jews were murdered, and during the second half of February, a reported 729 Jews were murdered. A further 678 Jews were arrested and shot during the first half of March.⁵²

The entire Jewish rural community in the Crimea was annihilated between November 1941 and March 1942. In cooperation with the village heads and the active participation of local police forces, the Einsatzgruppen did not miss a single rural settlement, even those with a minute Jewish community. Of the village leaders’ unmitigated enthusiasm for murdering Jews, the December 12, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report pointed out that “the village heads ask for permission to liquidate the Jews.”⁵³

Other groups involved in the murder of Jews in the Crimea consisted of companies of Tatar volunteers. In January 1942 a company of Tatar volunteers was established in Simferopol under the command of Einsatzgruppe 11. This company participated in anti-Jewish manhunts and murder actions in the rural regions. According to Amed Dinshaev, a Red Army officer cadet, who had deserted and become a platoon commander in this company, “A Tatar volunteer company was established in January 1942. . . . From March 1942, the men of this company were sent to carry out executions of Soviet citizens arrested by the ss. The platoon under my command took part in the executions six or seven times.”⁵⁴

With the exception of Sevastopol, which was still defended by the Soviet army, by the end of March 1942, no more Jews lived in the Crimea. According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated April 8, 1942, “Except for small groups which occasionally show up in the northern Crimea, there are no more Jews, Krimchaks, or Gypsies. . . . In the second half of March, a total of 1,501 people were executed. Among these were 588 Jews, 405 communists, 247 partisans.”⁵⁵

The murder of Jewish individuals and families who were turned over to the Germans, or unearthed in manhunts conducted by the Einsatzgruppen with the aid of army units, continued throughout the occupation.⁵⁶ According to estimates, some 40,000 Jews had been murdered in the Crimea by the spring of 1942, among them 5,500 to 6,000 Krimchaks.⁵⁷ Up to that time, between 4,000 and 5,000 Jews remained in Sevastopol.

I5

The German Army from “Freedom of Action” for the Einsatzgruppen to Active Collaboration in the Murders

SENIOR MILITARY COMMAND AND ORDERS TO THE TROOPS

The order issued on March 13, 1941, regarding Operation Barbarossa stressed that “within the area of Army operations, Reichsführer-SS will be entrusted, on behalf of the Führer, with special tasks. . . . Within these tasks the Reichsführer-SS will act independently.” Thus, although direct involvement with Einsatzgruppen activity was not required of the army, it chose, on its own initiative and out of sympathy with Nazi ideology, to cross the line that divided between granting “freedom of action” to the SS murder units and actual participation in their operations. Already, at the preparation stage of Operation Barbarossa, orders issued by the OKH concerning military jurisdiction and the behavior of occupying troops, together with the infamous Commissar Order, laid the foundation for the regime of terror imposed by the German army in the occupied Soviet territories.¹

The military administration took upon itself to determine and carry out all patently anti-Jewish activity, such as registration of Jews, marking them with yellow stars, forced labor, ghettoizing and starving them, etc. The longer the war continued, the more brutal became the anti-Jewish policies practiced by the army. On September 12, 1941, General Keitel issued the following order:

The struggle against Bolshevism demands ruthless and energetic action, and first of all against the Jews, as the main bearers of Bolshevism. Therefore, there will be no cooperation whatever between the Wehrmacht and the Jewish population, whose attitude is openly or secretly anti-German, and no use is to be made of individual Jews, for any preferential auxiliary services for the Wehrmacht. Under no circumstances are papers to be issued by Military Offices

to Jews confirming that they are employed for purposes of the Wehrmacht. The only exception to be made is the use of Jews in special labor columns, which are only to be employed under German supervision.²

This order was issued at a time when the wave of exterminations was at its peak. It was meant to justify Germany's murderous activity, or as Keitel defined it, the "ruthless and energetic action." Its aim, moreover, was to prevent the rescue of the thousands of ghetto Jews employed in various military installations and equipped with the *Scheinen* that granted them and their families a postponement—however temporary—of their deaths. The order authorized the employment of Jews in "labor columns," in other words, sanction to exploit the work of physically fit persons and to concentrate them in labor camps. All the others were to be sacrificed on the altar of the "struggle against Bolshevism."

On many occasions, German soldiers joined the Einsatzgruppen or police units and willingly participated in the murder of Jews. Although the army approved of the murder actions and assisted in carrying them out, it could not, for reasons of military discipline, reconcile itself with the independent activity of soldiers who participated in the murders. Unequivocal orders were required, therefore, for this widespread occurrence. General Hans von Salmuth, commander of the Eleventh Army Thirtieth Corps, issued a directive on August 8, 1941, in which he stressed the need for all possible means to break the fanatic ambitions of the communists and the Jews to block the German military advance and the necessity for extremely drastic action to be taken against them. Such action was entrusted to the Sipo, and only soldiers who had received unambiguous orders were allowed to participate in it. Moreover, off-duty soldiers were forbidden to observe these actions.³

General Karl Rundstedt, commander of Army Groups South, issued a directive to his troops on September 24, according to which the Jews in the occupied territories were "elements hostile to the Reich," that it was the task of the Sipo to fight them, but that individual soldiers were forbidden to participate on their own initiative in anti-Jewish riots perpetrated by the local population.⁴ There were no humanitarian motives behind Rundstedt's directive; rather, its aim was to prevent any potential obstacles to the planned and systematic activity of the Einsatzgruppen. It came in the wake of Einsatzgruppe C's complaint that German soldiers had taken part in anti-Jewish riots in Uman on September 21, 1941, together with members of the Ukrainian police. According to the October 20, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, the "systematic action of Einsatzkommando 5 suffered greatly by these [unplanned] excesses," by warning the Jews and thus enabling them to escape from the city.⁵

A directive entitled “Behavior of the Troops in the East,” which ideologically justified the extermination of the Jews, was issued by General Walter von Reichenau, commander of the Sixth Army, on October 10, 1941:

The essential aim of the campaign against the Judeo-Bolshevik system is the complete destruction of its power instruments. . . . Therefore the soldier must have full understanding for the necessity of a severe but just atonement on Jewish subhumanity. This has the further goal of nipping in the bud rebellions in the rear of the Wehrmacht which, as experience proves, have always been instigated by Jews. . . . Only in this way do we do justice to our historical task of liberating the German people, once and for all, from the Asiatic-Jewish peril.⁶

The OKH distributed von Reichenau’s directive among the army units along the eastern front on October 28, 1941, stressing that the Führer found its substance excellent. On November 21, 1941, General Erich von Manstein, commander of the Eleventh Army, issued a directive to his troops in the Crimea, in which he stressed that “the Jewish Bolshevik system must be eradicated once and for all. . . . The soldier must show understanding for the harsh atonement of Judaism, the spiritual carrier of the Bolshevik terror.”⁷

General-Colonel Hermann von Hoth, commander of the Seventeenth Armored Corps, active in the Army Group Center, published a directive to his troops that dealt with the ideological aspect of the war against the “Asian mode of thinking and primitive instincts, whipped up by a small number of mostly Jewish intellectuals. . . . This battle can only end with the destruction of one or the other: a compromise is out of the question.”⁸

The central motto in these directives was ideological: that the current war was being waged against Asian barbarism led by Judeo-Bolshevism, which threatened to take control of Europe and destroy its culture. Therefore, the means, be they ever so drastic, even to the extent of total annihilation, were justified. It stresses again, as the army orders before the invasion into Soviet Union, the adoption and full identification by the army high command with Nazi ideology.

The content and spirit of these directives were further expressed in the army newspapers and in the army’s propaganda machine. They lent ideological justice to the military administration’s aid to the SS units in murdering Jews and to the participation of military units in such actions. By the end of 1941, there was no longer any illusion as to the war being a short one, and the army was facing a tough and stubborn fight on the eastern front. It was necessary, therefore, to reinforce motivation among the troops, and the wording of these directives was affected by this need.

The process of annihilating the Soviet Jews, which was carried out openly and in the presence of soldiers, usually met with understanding and sympathy and, among some of the military, even with enthusiasm.⁹ But, notwithstanding the ideological claims and propaganda, some officers and soldiers questioned the need for the massacres during the first months of the war, especially when women and children were involved.¹⁰ In order to strengthen the understanding and sympathy with these murders, anti-Jewish propaganda rationalized that the Jews were responsible for the acts of sabotage in the occupied territories and for partisan activity. The emphasis, therefore, was that not only were the Jews the ideological enemy and the dominant factor in the communist country with whom Germany was at war, but also that they constituted the main source of resistance to the occupation and, as such, they jeopardized the lives of the soldiers in the rear areas. Thus, according to this line of propaganda, the Jew became a real danger and had to be eliminated in order to achieve pacification in the occupied territories.

Accusations that the Jews were behind partisan warfare were completely unfounded. Indeed, several significant acts of sabotage were committed in the occupied territories during the early days of German occupation, such as those in which former government buildings were blown up in Kiev and German soldiers and officers lost their lives, and in Odessa, where the victims were mainly Romanians. The Germans blamed the Jews for these acts of sabotage and, by doing so, justified the murder of thousands of Jews in these cities and persuaded the military that, for their personal safety, it was necessary to exterminate the Jews.

In their reports, the Einsatzgruppen were the first to justify the murder of Jews by presenting it as retaliation for the Jews' anti-German activities. From here, apparently, the trend slipped easily into the consciousness of the German civil and military administration.¹¹ According to German historian Christian Streit, “The inclusion of those soldiers, who were not anti-Semitic, in the policy of destruction became easier to the extent that the Jews were identified with the partisan movement. . . . This enabled them to manipulate soldiers who, for their part, were able to silence their conscience by telling themselves that the thousands who were shot were, after all, partisans — bandits and criminals carrying arms when they were seized. . . . However flimsy and weak this fiction was, its significance in the removal of all existing inhibitions should not be underestimated.”¹²

Accusations against the Jews for spreading anti-German propaganda took place in the Einsatzgruppen reports. Thus, according to the July 23, 1941, report, just one month after the invasion, which dealt with the general mood of the population in the occupied Soviet territories, “Reports that Jewish circles spread horror

propaganda and other incitements against the Germans among the population become more and more frequent.”¹³ And so on, according to the November 14, 1941 report:

As a result of numerous complaints about their provocative behavior in Gorki (northeast of Mogilev) as well as in the surrounding area, a total of 2,200 Jews of all ages were liquidated in mopping-up operations in eight localities. . . . In Mstislavl, about 80 km east of Mogilev, 900 Jews were liquidated for breaking regulations of the German forces, harboring partisans in transit, and providing them with food and clothing. . . . In Mogilev, with the aid of the Police Regiment “Center,” 3,726 Jews of both sexes and all ages were liquidated by this action. These measures were necessary. . . . In spite of previous measures taken against them, they not only failed to desist but continued their anti-German activities (sabotage, support of partisans, refusal to work, etc.). . . . It could no longer be tolerated.¹⁴

Another Einsatzgruppen report rationalizes the murder of 5,281 Jews in Bobruisk with elaborate descriptions of crimes supposedly committed by these people against the German occupying forces.¹⁵ According to the report on Kishinev, “Up to this point 551 Jews have been liquidated, of these 151 for participating in sabotage acts, 400 in reprisal for shooting at German medical trucks and for lighting signal flares for Red aviators.”¹⁶ The report on Zhitomir and its surrounds had it that “about 400 Jews, mostly saboteurs and political functionaries, were liquidated during the last few days. . . . In Korostyshev 40 Jews were liquidated for sabotage, spying, and looting. . . . Jews terrorized the population and had kept close contact with the armed guerrillas in the vicinity.”¹⁷ And, according to a report on the area east of Zhitomir, “In the area around Brusilov-Kornin, Jewish-Bolshevik gangs have been formed terrorizing the Ukrainian population. . . . In view of these unprecedented Jewish actions it is intended to round up the Jews in certain villages to liquidate them.”¹⁸ In the Einsatzgruppen reports that dealt with the extermination of Jews in areas under military administration in eastern Belorussia and central Russia, justification was also given for the massacres by blaming the Jews for collaborating with partisans. According to the October 9, 1941 report:

Various acts of sabotage committed by Jews in Borisov were confirmed. At a mopping-up operation there, a total of 321 Jews were liquidated. Near Smolovich, the Jews were under suspicion as well of having several times, together with the partisans and other criminal elements, blown up the Minsk-Smolensk railway line. In conjunction with the Kommando from Minsk, 1,401 Jews were shot during large-scale operations carried out in Smolovich.¹⁹

And the October 25, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report stated:

In the vicinity of Shklov, about 50 km north of Mogilev, acts of sabotage were constantly committed. . . . An inquiry showed that Jews of Shklov had taken part in these acts of sabotage; thus, 627 Jews were liquidated.²⁰

According to the December 19, 1941, report:

Since the Jews in Parichi near Bobruisk showed a hostile attitude toward the Germans and had close connections with the partisans, a special action was carried out in the course of which 1,013 Jews and Jewesses were shot. A large-scale action against the Jews was necessary in Rudnia near Smolensk because they lent extensive help to the partisans. . . . Altogether 835 Jews of both sexes were shot. . . . Confidential agents reported that the still numerous partisans in Gomel were aided in every way by the Jews. Consequently, a special action had to be carried out in Gomel, Rogachev, and Korma. Thus a total of 2,365 Jews and Jewesses were shot. Following an action against the partisans which was carried out by the 221st Security Division with the aid of a subunit of Einsatzkommando 9 in the area of Klimovichi and Cherikov, . . . the Jews of these townships proved hostile to the Germans and sympathized with the partisans. Altogether 786 Jews of both sexes were shot.²¹

The Einsatzgruppen reports, in which the Jews were presented as being in active collaboration with the partisan movement, the above mentioned orders and directives by high-ranking army commanders, and army propaganda were the channels through which the German army was fed this line of propaganda, which justified the extermination of the Jews. This so-called connection between the Jews and the partisans increased in emphasis in October and November 1941, taking the form of directives and reports issued by the various military echelons in the occupied Soviet territories. The commander of the 707 Infantry Division, in an order to reinforce patrol activity of his units in Belorussia, issued on October 16, 1941, stated: "While patrolling, care has to be taken to remove completely the Jews from the villages. It is proved that they are the sole supporters that the partisans find to hold up through the winter. Therefore their extermination (*vernichtung*) has to be carried out ruthlessly."²²

According to an army directive from Belorussia entitled "State of the Enemy" and dated November 13, 1941, "The results of recent operations prove that the role of the Jews among the partisans has increased. More has to be done so that the Jews, without any exception, shall disappear from the area."²³

The inclusion of the Jews in the title "State of the Enemy" and the emphasis that the Jews had to disappear left no choice but to exterminate them as being

a real enemy. The December 8, 1941, report from the rear area army command in Belorussia summed up events in November and included the clause, "Jews: Means taken against the Jews, spreaders of Bolshevik ideology and leaders of the partisan movement, are meeting with complete success. Placing the Jews in ghettos and exterminating them . . . is having the best kind of calming effect on the region."²⁴

Descriptions of partisan activity at that time was grossly exaggerated, and claims of Jewish connections with the partisans lacked foundation. In early 1942, by which time many thousands of Jews had already been murdered in the occupied territories, the partisan movement was still in its early stages. It did not even exist in those areas that had been annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40. The only activity in those areas came from groups of soldiers and a few communist activists, including some Jews, who had not managed to retreat or escape. These groups, who focused most of their energy on surviving in the forests, carried out minimal partisan activity. More organized partisan activity, which had already begun toward the end of 1941, took place in areas closer to the front, but very few Jews remained there alive.²⁵ Exploited, starved, trapped in ghettos, and exterminated, the Jews were not involved at this time in anti-German activity. They were too concerned with the battle for survival. Only a few Jews had managed to escape to the forests by the spring of 1942, and these had no noticeable effect on partisan activity in the region.

A more objective description of the behavior of the Jews during that period can be found in a document prepared by Professor Peter-Heinz Seraphim, from the Armaments Office in the Ukraine, to General Georg Thomas, head of the Wehrmacht's Economics and Armament Office, on December 2, 1941. The document dealt with the economic situation in the Ukraine, as well as the Jewish issue and results of their extermination:

[The Jews] tried to prevent anything that would cause the German administration dissatisfaction. The fact that, deep down, they hate the German army and administration is irrefutable and hardly surprising. Nonetheless, there is no proof that the Jews in general, or even the majority of them, are involved in seditious activity. Of course there are among them certain terrorists and saboteurs, to the same extent that these exist among the Ukrainian community. But it should not be said that, as such, the Jews present a danger to the German armed forces. The goods produced by the Jews (who are naturally working under duress and fear) are to the satisfaction of the German army and administration. . . . Up to this time, between 150,000 and 200,000 Jews have apparently been executed in the regions of Reichskommissariat Ukraine. No consideration was given to economic needs. Finally, it may be said that

this way of solving the Jewish question, as it was implemented in the Ukraine, which was based in principle on ideological theory, had these results: the removal of some of the excess feeders in the cities and the removal of some of the population which undoubtedly hates us. The removal of essential professionals, who in many cases were also extremely necessary to the interests of the armed forces, had a bad effect on the soldiers, who, in any case, come in direct contact with the executions. The effect is savagery among the units carrying out the executions and the Orpo.²⁶

Although referring only to the Ukraine, Professor Seraphim's document contradicts the theories in the Einsatzgruppen reports adopted by the military and repeated in their own reports, according to which the Jews were the most active anti-German element in the region. But Seraphim's report had no effect on the German army's involvement in murder operations, which only escalated with the passage of time.

While presenting the Jews as an active and aggressive anti-German element, German propaganda continued to demonize Jews by caricaturing the "Jewish type," whose pictures appeared in propaganda publications such as *Mitteilungen für die Truppe*. This anti-Jewish propaganda, which appeared in directives issued by the German army's higher echelons and in army publications, influenced many of the soldiers. As one soldier wrote home to his family in Germany, "We have learned here to recognize the terrible danger posed [to us] by the Jews. Destruction and uprooting is the only option, and we hope that we are not too far from that hour in which the last of them will dig his grave."²⁷ And in other letters from the front: "The great task given to us in the struggle against Bolshevism lies in the destruction of eternal Jewry. . . . I recognized the Jewish poison. . . . We must and we will liberate the world from this plague . . . and we shall not return before we have uprooted all evil and destroyed the center of the Jewish-Bolshevik 'world-do-gooders.'"²⁸

These letters and many others like them point to an anti-Semitic frame of mind characteristic of many of the German soldiers on the eastern front. This anti-Semitism was rooted in the past, but it was given a powerful boost by military propaganda and cruel reality.

The OKW, who fully justified the murder of Jews, acted to keep the fact of the murders classified; thus, according to a directive issued by Keitel on November 2, 1941, "The security of the German armed forces . . . as well as the safety of the German nation in the future, makes numerous executions imperative. It is explicitly forbidden to take photos of such executions. In special cases when taking photos is required for purely official purposes, this must be sanctioned by a commanding officer not below division commander."²⁹

The Einsatzgruppen reports, with their descriptions of Jewish sabotage and partisan activity, were published by RSHA and handed over to the army. But most of this kind of information reached the army via direct connections maintained between the Einsatzgruppen and army units and the military administration. These were the bodies whose cooperation and assistance the Einsatzgruppen needed in order to carry out their massacres of the Jews.

According to the August 20, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, "The relationship with the German army is as cordial as it was previously. In particular, army circles show a steadily growing interest in and understanding of tasks and matters concerning the work of the security police. This could be observed particularly during the executions."³⁰ And, according to the September 24, 1941, report, "Cooperation with the police and army headquarters has been extremely gratifying. . . . In the course of some larger operations carried out by us, army units have been placed under our command. . . . Until now, our requests have been granted every time."³¹

The Einsatzgruppen reports frequently mention murder actions in which army units participated. In the western Ukrainian town of Lutsk, 1,160 Jews were shot on July 2, 1941, "by the Ukrainians with the help of one platoon of the police and one platoon of the infantry."³² According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated July 24, 1941, "Cooperation between EK 8, based in Baranovichi, and the appropriate army units is particularly successful. . . . With the help of the GFP, the Abwehr units, and the field gendarmerie, . . . another 301 persons were thus liquidated in Baranovichi."³³ In Minsk, 2,278 Jews were executed with the help of military police.³⁴ In Borisov, "at the request of the local commander," 146 Jews were shot.³⁵ The 354 Infantry Regiment of 707 Infantry Division participated in the massacres of Jews in the Krupki region (Belorussia), in cooperation with EK 8, in October 1941.³⁶

On August 7, 1941, the army command in Zhitomir in cooperation with EK 4a carried out an execution of 402 Jews.³⁷ The decision to murder all the Jews of Zhitomir was made at a meeting between Sonderkommando 4a and the town's military governor.³⁸ Following the wave of explosions and arson that swept over Kiev a few days after the German invasion, the Einsatzgruppen reported the "execution of at least 50,000 Jews planned. German army welcomes measures and demands drastic procedure. Garrison commander advocates public execution of 20 Jews."³⁹ Arrangements for the annihilation of the Jews of Kharkov were made together with the Sixth Army headquarters and the local Feldkommandant.⁴⁰ In the Crimean city of Simferopol, the army ordered the Einsatzgruppen to exter-

minate all the Jews by the end of 1941 and placed hundreds of troops at the EG's disposal in order to conduct three manhunts for Jews in hiding.⁴¹

These are but a few of the instances in which Jews were murdered by the EG assisted by German army units. Massacres carried out by the German police and ss groups other than the Einsatzgruppen, and backed up by army units, are not mentioned in the Einsatzgruppen reports. Although only limited data is available for these incidents, there is no doubt that they were not isolated.

In most of the towns and townships in the occupied Soviet territories, the first step in a massacre of Jews usually came in the form of an order posted on the town's billboards by the local Ortskommandantur, calling on the Jews to report at a specific time and place for resettlement. Such orders were posted in Kharkov, Kiev, and other towns. The Ortskommandanturen were well aware that the so-called resettlement would invariably end in the Jews being murdered and that no camps had been erected in which to accommodate the Jews. The Field- and Ortskommandanturen were interested in getting rid of the Jews and were therefore willing accomplices in the slaughters.

In certain places, especially rural areas and small townships, where the Jewish populations were too small for the Einsatzgruppen and police units to reach them, the murders were carried out by the army. An order issued on November 24, 1941, by the military commander of Belorussia to the soldiers of 707 Infantry Division contained a clause entitled "Jews and Gypsies," which reiterated three orders issued in September and October:

The Jews must disappear from the rural areas, and the Gypsies, too, must be exterminated. Large anti-Jewish actions are not the responsibility of the division's units. These will be carried out by the civil authorities or the police. . . . When [we] encounter groups of Jews in rural areas, the army unit itself can exterminate them or transfer them to ghettos in the larger towns, for this purpose. There they can be handed over to the civil authorities or to the Sipo.⁴²

In this directive, the army determined that, apart from certain large cities, all the rural regions were to be cleansed of Jews. Army units were able to decide whether to exterminate Jews or to transfer them to ghettos. And the army did, indeed, carry out murders. According to a report by the Gebietskommissar of the Slonim region of western Belorussia, regarding the murder of Jews in the areas under his authority during November 1941, "For the time being the rural area has undergone widespread cleansing by the army. Unfortunately, this has taken place only in townships with populations of under 1,000."⁴³ And a report by the military commander of regions of western Belorussia stated that 10,940 people had been taken prisoner in battles with partisans during the period between

October 11 and November 10, and 10,431 of them had been executed.⁴⁴ According to this report, German losses consisted of two dead and five injured. It is clear from the minute losses incurred in these actions (which may also have been the result of accidents) that these had not been battles with partisans—indeed, at that time, there had been no organized partisan activity in western Belorussia. Those people who had been taken prisoner and executed by the German army were Jews from the local towns and townships, who had also been mentioned in the report of the Gebietskommissar of the Slonim region.

The German army did not limit itself to granting freedom of action to the Einsatzgruppen and Orpo to exterminate Jews in areas under military administration; it also encouraged and participated in the carnage—supporting Nazi racist theories and defining the Jews as a definite enemy who endangered security in the rear areas of the occupied territories of Soviet Union.

16

Persecution of the Jews in District Galicia

ANNEXATION OF EAST GALICIA TO THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Between the two world wars, eastern Galicia was a part of Poland and included the counties of Stanislaw, Ternopol, and Lvov. After 1939 it became the part of western Ukraine annexed to the Soviet Union. On August 1, 1941, following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, eastern Galicia was annexed to the General Government and named “District Galicia.” Karl Lasch was appointed governor of District Galicia, and Friedrich Katzmann was appointed ss and Police Leader there.

During early July 1941, a special 150-man company, formed from Sipo personnel from District Cracow, arrived in Lvov and took part in the massacre of Jews in various parts of District Galicia. After Einsatzgruppe C had moved eastward, permanent Sipo stations were formed in the district’s main towns, based on personnel from this company.¹

An estimated 600,000 Jews lived in District Galicia at the time of the German invasion.² On the annexation of east Galicia, anti-Jewish policies were adopted similar to those in other parts of the General Government, although here they were much more extreme. All the restrictions to which Jews were subjected under General Government were effective in District Galicia. A decree was published on August 7, 1941, forcing Jews into hard labor; on September 15, Jews were forced to wear a white armband marked with a blue Star of David. The Jews of this district were also subject to persecutions suffered by their counterparts in other parts of the occupied Soviet territories, including the execution of thousands of Jews during the first months of the occupation. The mass murder began in March 1942.

The German civil administration appointed Jewish councils—for the most part, these were the same as had existed under military administration—and

a Jewish police. The Jewish councils were responsible for filling the quotas of Jews required in the forced labor camps. In some of the towns of District Galicia, ghettos were established during the first months of the occupation, but in most places these were established only in 1942, coincidental with the mass murder of Jews at that time.

MASSACRES

The first incidents of mass murder of Jews in the entire area of General Government took place in District Galicia in early October 1941. In September 1941, discussions in Katzmann's office in Lvov regarding the annihilation of Jews led to a decision that massacres would begin in the Stanislaw region south of District Galicia.³ In addition to the local Jews, Hungary, whose army operated in these areas, expelled thousands of Jews from Transcarpathian Ukraine, to Kamenets-Podolski, Stanislaw, Kolomyia, Nadvornaia, and other towns in the Stanislaw district during the first few months of the war.⁴

The first massacre took place in Nadvornaia, whose prewar Jewish population had numbered around 3,500. Some 1,000 Jews had been brought there from Transcarpathian Ukraine during September 1941. On October 4 more than 2,000 Jews were taken to a forest outside of town and shot by German and Ukrainian police.⁵

The largest massacre of that period took place in Stanislaw, which had the second largest Jewish community, after Lvov, in District Galicia. The town's Jewish population had increased during the second half of 1939, with the arrival of thousands of refugees from German-occupied Poland. During the first weeks of the occupation, with the Hungarian army in control of the town, the Jewish community was increased by several thousand more exiles from Transcarpathian-Ukraine. By early August 1941 the town's Jewish population was an estimated 35,000 to 38,000 and included Jews fleeing from the Ukrainian pogroms in the nearby townships.⁶

About 500 members of the Jewish intelligentsia were shot in the vicinity of the town in early August 1941. The first large massacre was planned for the first half of October 1941, and reinforcements were brought to the town the night before from Police Battalion 133 and the Ukrainian police. Some 20,000 Jews were removed from their homes on October 12, 1941, and taken to the Jewish cemetery. Between 10,000 and 12,000 Jews were shot that day. At dusk, the remaining thousands were sent back to their homes from the cemetery. Throughout the day, while Jews were being murdered, the local rabble hunted for any Jews in hiding and looted the homes of those who had been taken to the cemetery. The Stanislaw ghetto, which

accommodated between 23,000 and 26,000 Jews, had been established during the first half of December 1941. Attorney Michael Lamm was appointed to head the Jewish council in the ghetto, where the death toll was high due to starvation and epidemics. Many of the young people were sent to labor camps. Groups of Jews continued to be brought to the cemetery and murdered there.⁷

In Kolomyia, the prewar Jewish population numbered around 15,000. According to a list prepared by local Ukrainians, 2,850 Jews were murdered in October. A further 1,200 Jews were murdered on December 23, 1941, and 400 members of the Jewish intelligentsia were shot on January 24, 1942. These murders were carried out 8 kilometers out of town, near the village of Sheparovtse. More murder actions were carried out in the Stanislav region from October through December 1941.⁸

The prewar (1939) Jewish community in Lvov, the capital of District Galicia, was around 110,000. After the outbreak of war in the second half of 1939, large numbers of Jewish refugees arrived in Lvov from the occupied areas of Poland. No data exists as to the exact number of Jews living in Lvov at the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union.⁹ One source places the number at around 135,000.¹⁰ According to a German source and other sources, the number was 160,000.¹¹ A labor camp was established in Yanovska Street in September 1941, under the command of the SS, where some 600 Jews were working. The camp became more and more like a concentration camp, and Jews continued to be brought to it. The camp became a nightmare for the Jews of Lvov.¹²

Dr. Josef Parnes, a lawyer by profession, was chairman of the Lvov Jewish council; in World War I, he had served as an officer in the Austrian army. He was courageous in his dealings with the German administration and did not acquiesce to their wave of demands. In late October, Parnes was ordered to supply 500 young Jews to the Yanovska camp; he refused to do so. He was arrested and murdered, and Dr. Adolf Rotfeld was appointed in his stead. Helped by the Jewish police, Rotfeld rounded up the necessary 500 Jews demanded by the Germans.¹³

On November 18, 1941, the Germans announced the establishment of a ghetto in Lvov. The Jews were required to move by December 15 into the Klaparov and Zamarstynov suburbs, two poor neighborhoods in which housing and sanitation conditions were extremely inferior. The way into the ghetto led through Platevna street, where, under the railway bridge, German and Ukrainian police stood waiting to torment and rob the Jews of their possessions. On their way to the ghetto, old and infirm Jews were taken to a half-destroyed building. Thus according to Zaderecki:

The old men and women were ordered to undress. They were stood opposite each other in two rows against the walls. A signal was given for them to start

singing. . . . The men were later shot [as they stood] against the wall. The women, in their underwear, were taken late in the evening to a nearby school building. At night, they were loaded on trucks and, in their underwear, were driven to the Lichakov sands; with them were the bodies of the murdered men. In the sands, the old women were forced to dig graves for the dead and for themselves. They were then ordered to lie down in the pit, one on top of the other, before being shot.¹⁴

The number of Jews murdered on their way to the ghetto reached 5,000; they call this “the death-bridge action.” Thousands of Jews had been unable to make it to the area designated for the ghetto by December 15. The Germans reconciled themselves to this fact and allowed the others to remain in their former homes. Thus an open ghetto was formed in the city, with some Jews still living in their original homes. The Lvov ghetto was closed only in September 1942.¹⁵

Some 17,000 Jews lived in Ternopol on the eve of the German invasion. After the pogrom in early July 1941 in which some 5,000 Jews were murdered, there remained in Ternopol between 12,000 and 13,000 Jews when the town was annexed to the General Government. A Jewish council was established in Ternopol in August 1941 and a ghetto in September. It was the first ghetto in District Galicia, and between 12,000 and 13,000 Jews were forced into an area that had formerly housed between 4,000 and 5,000 people. Labor camps were built near Ternopol in late 1941 and early 1942, and Jews were transferred there from the ghetto and from nearby townships. The death toll in the ghetto and labor camps was high, due to starvation and an epidemic of typhoid fever.¹⁶

The prewar Jewish population of Borislav numbered around 14,000. On November 29 and 30, about 1,500 Jews were murdered there, in accordance with a list prepared by the local Ukrainians. In Stryi, whose prewar Jewish population had been around 11,000, some 1,000 Jews were murdered in early September.¹⁷

Massacres, in which hundreds of Jews were annihilated—in some places, thousands—took place in most of the smaller Jewish communities in eastern Galicia. With the exception of those in the Stanislaw region, the actions were not typical of mass murder. In the smaller communities the Ukrainians decided to murder members of the Jewish intelligentsia, Jews who had been active in the Soviet administration, and anyone else they bore a grudge against.¹⁸

LABOR CAMPS ON THROUGH ROAD IV

One of the greatest problems facing the invading German army was the Soviet Union’s faulty road system. The roads to the southern regions of the Ukraine, toward the Crimea and Caucasus, crossed District Galicia, and plans for

the economic exploitation of the Ukraine and the oil-rich regions of the Caucasus played an important role in Germany's war plans. The army's supply system and its strategic plans for the advance toward the Caucasus and Stalingrad depended on adequate roads. Therefore, the German administration decided to construct a road, starting in the Pszemysl region on the former Soviet-German border and running through to Taganrog on the banks of the Azov Sea in southeast Ukraine. The road was to be based on existing routes with improvements and extensions. The road was given the name Through Road 4 (Durchgangsstrasse IV), or DG IV, and passed through Lvov, Vinnitsa, and Dnepropetrovsk. The German ss was the body entrusted with overseeing its construction, and management of the work was placed in the hands of the Organization Todt, which engaged private firms, mainly from Germany and Netherlands, to carry out the construction. Work on the road continued throughout the German occupation, and most of the work on the project was done by Jewish prisoners. Dozens of work camps were erected along the length of the road, to accommodate the thousands of Jewish road workers brought in from the various ghettos in the Ukraine. The camps were guarded by Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian, and Cossack Schutzmannschaften.¹⁹ Already, during the first few months of the occupation, such labor camps were erected all over District Galicia, through which the part of the road passed from Pszemysl in the west to Ternopol in the east. And thus, according to Katzmann, in a report on the employment of Jews on the construction of the road:

Options for labor were opened to us first and foremost with regard to carrying out the important and extremely essential work for the entire southern front—the restoration of DG IV, which was in terrible condition. On October 15, 1941, construction began on camps along the road's route, and within only a few weeks and notwithstanding considerable hardships, seven camps are already in place and accommodating 4,000 Jews. In the wake of these first camps, further camps were erected immediately. . . . Some 20,000 Jews of the Jewish workforce have passed through these camps.²⁰

Conditions in the camps—hard labor, accommodation, the starvation rations allocated to the inmates, and torment at the hands of the ss and the Schutzmannschaften guards—were extremely harsh. Recruitment of workers for the camps, for which the Jewish councils were responsible, met with great difficulty. Facing the choice between filling quotas of people necessary for work on the road or allowing the Germans and Ukrainians to pick people at random off the streets, in their homes, or at places of work, the Jewish councils preferred to do it themselves. As a rule, the people sent to the labor camps were young and unmarried, and the Jewish councils helped the camp inmates with food and clothing.

The fate of the Jews of District Galicia was worse than that of the remaining Jews in the General Government. There the Jews were closed in ghettos, suffering from starvation and sickness. The death toll there was high, and people were subject to forced labor, persecution, and expulsions. Still, in the rest of the General Government, Jews were not being murdered in their thousands, as they were in Lvov, Stanislaw, and other parts of District Galicia. There were several reasons for this disparity. Already during the early days of the occupation, units of the Einsatzgruppen were active in District Galicia and, as in other parts of occupied Soviet Union, they were engaged in murdering thousands of Jews. Eastern Galicia came under German rule at a time when anti-Jewish policy became more extreme and mass murder actions were carried out in neighboring Ukraine. Large sectors of the local Ukrainian population were rabid anti-Semites, and it was they who carried out the pogroms during the first days of German rule, and from among them the local police were formed and placed at the disposal of the German Sipo. This state of affairs provided the conditions for carrying out mass murders of the Jews in District Galicia before it started in other regions of the General Government.

The massacres of Jews in autumn and winter of 1941 were an introduction to the huge wave of exterminations that washed over the Jews of District Galicia during the spring of 1942.

I7

Romania and Transnistria Expulsion and Mass Murder

MASSACRE OF THE JEWS OF BESSARABIA AND
NORTH BUKOVINA, JULY AND AUGUST 1941

The Jews of Bessarabia, north Bukovina, the district of Odessa, and the southern regions of the Vinnitsa district, between the rivers Dnestr and Bug, faced a unique fate under German-Romanian occupation. Ten days before the German invasion of the Soviet Union (June 10 and 11, 1941), Germany signed a treaty with Romania regarding the latter's participation in the forthcoming war. According to the treaty, Romania was promised the return of Bessarabia and north Bukovina, which for the last year had been under Soviet rule, as well as the region known as Transnistria, between the Dnestr and the Bug, including the city of Odessa. At dawn on June 22, 1941, the German Eleventh Army and the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies began their attack on the Soviet Union from the Romanian border. The Fourth Army attack was aimed at Bessarabia, and the Third Army attacked toward north Bukovina.

With the occupation of these areas, Bessarabia and north Bukovina came under Romanian control at the end of July 1941. On August 30, 1941, a treaty was signed in the Bessarabian town of Tighina (Russian name Bendery) between representatives of the German and Romania armies, regarding the transfer of Transnistria to Romanian rule. Romanian prime minister Ion Antonescu appointed Professor Georga Alexianu governor of Transnistria. The fate of the Jews was determined according to the Final Solution policies of Nazi Germany, alongside the Romanian administration's attitude toward the Jews, especially those in the territories formerly under Soviet rule.

Between 160,000 and 165,000 Jews are estimated to have remained under German occupation in Bessarabia, including the district of Khotin; in north Bukovina the number was around 70,000. The Romanian administration decided

to purge the regions of their Jews. In a speech at a meeting of the Romanian government on July 8, 1941, Ion Antonescu said:

I am for the forced emigration of the entire Jewish element from Bessarabia and Bukovina, which must be thrown over the border. I am also in favor of the forced emigration of the Ukrainian element. . . . You must be merciless. . . . There are no other favorable moments in our history. If need be, [shoot them] with machine guns. . . . There is no law.¹

After entering Bessarabia and Bukovina, the Romanian army started the expulsions and murder of Jews. As it advanced into the Ukraine, the army handed over responsibility for these territories to the Romanian Ministry of Interior and the Gendarmerie, which was under its command. They became the main force to continue the expulsion and annihilation of the Jews.

General Konstantin Vasiliu, commander of the Romanian Gendarmerie, convened his officers and told them that their task was to purge the region, including “the immediate extermination of Jews residing in rural areas and closing the urban Jews in ghettos.” Another Romanian unit to participate in anti-Jewish activity was the 160-man mobile Special Intelligence Service (SSI).²

Einsatzgruppe D entered its area of activity in Bessarabia and Bukovina in early July. Sonderkommando 10b accompanied the Romanian Third Army toward Chernovtsy, Sonderkommando 11a accompanied the Romanian Fourth Army toward Kishinev, and some Einsatzgruppe units operated in the areas occupied by the German Eleventh Army. Einsatzkommando 12 operated in south Bessarabia.

During the first month of the occupation, the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina were looted and murdered; all this was perpetrated by the Romanian army, the Gendarmerie, and many of the local Ukrainians and Moldavians. Thousands of Jews in the villages and townships along the advance route of the Romanian army were murdered during the first half of July.³ In the town of Novosielitsa, for example, more than 900 Jews were murdered by soldiers on July 7–8.⁴ Many Jews who lived on the Romanian side of the border, west of the river Prut, also fell victim to expulsions and murder. The most infamous pogrom of that time is the one known as the Yassi pogrom, which raged between June 28 and July 1, 1941, and in which between 8,000 and 13,000 Jews were murdered or died in the death trains.⁵ The murderous attacks on the Jewish population were accompanied by rape and plunder.

Chernovtsy fell to the Germans on July 5, 1941, with all its remaining 55,000 Jewish population. Joined by local mobs, the invading soldiers embarked on a campaign of plunder and murder. On July 6, Sonderkommando 10b arrived in town. Assisted by the local Romanian police, SK 10b arrested some 1,500 Jews,

including community leaders and members of the intelligentsia. The total number of Jews murdered during the first few days of German-Romanian occupation of Chernovtsy stood at some 2,000.⁶ According to the August 3 Einsatzgruppen report, “In cooperation with the Romanian police in Chernovtsy 682 Jews of the approximately 1,200 arrested Jews were killed.”⁷

The extent of the massacres in Bessarabia was greater even than in north Bukovina. In the northeastern Bessarabian town of Iedintsi, whose prewar Jewish population had been 5,500, Romanian soldiers murdered about 500 Jews on July 6, 1941, one day after the town was occupied. A few days later, Romanian soldiers from the Fifth Infantry Division murdered the majority of the 1,000 strong Jewish population of Pyrlitsa, a township in the district of Beltsy. From the HQ of the German Eleventh Army operating in the region came unprecedented complaints to the Romanian GHQ about the behavior of the Romanian soldiers. A tendentious inquiry conducted by the Romanian HQ determined that Jews had shot at German soldiers and that the “few” alleged massacres were carried out in retaliation by German soldiers.⁸

The town of Beltsy, whose prewar Jewish population of some 15,000 had been the second largest in Bessarabia, fell to the German army on July 9, 1941. In early August, the Jews were removed from the town and concentrated in a camp about 12 kilometers away in the Rauta forest. Starvation and sickness claimed many victims, and by late August only about 3,000 were still alive.⁹

Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia, had an estimated 60,000 prewar Jewish population. Thousands—over half the population, according to some sources—had left the town in an attempt to reach the unoccupied Soviet territories. An estimated 10,000 Jews perished on escape routes, mainly at the hands of Romanian soldiers. The German and Romanian armies captured Kishinev on July 17, 1941. Within days, the Romanian soldiers and local inhabitants started to murder Jews, regardless of age or gender. On entering the city, Einsatzkommando 11a, in contrast, embarked on the systematic murder of Jewish leaders and members of the intelligentsia. According to various estimates, over 10,000 Jews were murdered in the course of this wave of anti-Jewish activity. On July 24 and 25, the city’s remaining Jews—about 11,000 in all—were forced into a ghetto that took up several streets surrounding the old marketplace. A Jewish council was appointed in the ghetto. On August 1, Romanian soldiers removed 550 Jews, including women, from the ghetto and led them out of town, where they shot them.¹⁰ According to one source, some of the women who were both young and beautiful were not shot but sent to a military brothel in the town of Soroca.¹¹ The Kishinev ghetto existed for a short time; the Romanian authorities informed the Jewish council in early September 1941 that all the inhabitants were being transferred to Transnistria.

In late July, the Jews of Bessarabia and north Bukovina were ordered to wear a yellow patch on their clothing. Toward the end of July, before Transnistria came under Romanian rule, between 25,000 and 27,500 Jews were expelled by the Romanian authorities in Bessarabia to the Mogilev-Podolsky district, east of the Dnestr, in order for them to be exterminated by the Germans, who controlled the region. The German authorities, who at that time were facing problems at the front, did not want the Jews and decided to return them to Bessarabia. According to the August 29, 1941, Einsatzgruppen report, "The Romanians had driven thousands [of Jews] from Bessarabia and Bukovina into the German sphere. In the vicinity of Mogilev-Podolsky-Yampol, a total of approximately 27,500 Jews were driven back to Romanian territory and 1,265 . . . were shot."¹² About half of the expelled Jews were returned in mid-August, and the Romanian authorities had no choice but to accept them; half of them were shot by the Germans while they were still on the eastern side of the Dnestr.¹³

Having failed to transfer thousands of Jews to Transnistria in late July and early August, the Romanian authorities decided to concentrate the Jewish population in temporary ghettos. Conditions in these ghettos were terrible; there was horrible overcrowding, abominable sanitation, and no food, and disease and epidemics were rife. The death toll in these ghettos was high, and the Jewish population decreased rapidly. More than 20,000 were concentrated in Secureni, but hunger, overcrowding, and cholera resulted in the expulsion of half of them to a ghetto in Iedintsi.¹⁴ The expulsions into temporary ghettos became death marches, as Solomon Shapira described it:

On August 1, the entire Jewish population of Khotin was expelled from the town. . . . We were not told where we were going. . . . Overnight stops in an open field became real nightmares, especially for the young women. Several of them were raped and then shot to death. . . . Hunger tormented us. . . . Then the greedy money-grubbers from the farms would arrive, bringing with them food to barter. . . . For a shirt, we received an egg; for a pair of trousers, a loaf of bread. . . . The farmers would pay money to the guards to allow them to loot the Jews who lagged behind the convoys, before they were shot. . . . After weeks on the Bessarabian roads, along which countless dead bodies were thrown . . . we arrived in Secureni in early September.¹⁵

The Jewish communities in south Bessarabia were smaller than those in north and central Bessarabia. Cetatea-Alba (in Russian: Belgorod-Dnestrovski) was one of the larger communities, numbering around 5,000 Jews, a relatively large number of whom managed to be evacuated, mainly in the direction of Odessa. Most of the 20,000 Jews remaining in this part of the country, which included

the districts of Kiliya and Izmaiyl, were murdered during the first months of occupation.¹⁶

Official Romanian sources regarding the numbers of Jews in Bessarabia and north Bukovina in September 1941 are not uniform. However, based on these available data, the number of Jews in Bessarabia, including the Khotin district, was about 73,000; in north Bukovina, in the districts of Chernovtsy and Storozhinets, the number was 54,000.¹⁷ Taking into consideration those Jews who avoided registering altogether, it is reasonable to assume that the number of Jews in Bessarabia was as high as 80,000, and in north Bukovina, around 60,000. It is possible, therefore, to assess that, of the 160,000 to 165,000 Jews remaining in Bessarabia under German occupation, between 80,000 and 85,000 were murdered in pogroms in July and August 1941, or they died in the expulsions or as a result of the harsh conditions in the ghettos and camps. Included in this number are the 13,000 Jews that the Romanians banished east of the Dnestr in late July 1941 and who were murdered there by the Germans. Out of the 70,000 Jews remaining in North Bukovina, some 10,000 perished. The overall death toll, before the deportations to Transnistria started, was between 90,000 and 95,000 Jews.¹⁸

Transnistria came under Romanian control following the treaty of Tighina in the first days of September 1941. Now that the crossings over the Dnestr were in the hands of the Romanians, they could fulfill their vision of “ethnic cleansing” by banishing the remaining Jews from Bessarabia and north Bukovina to Transnistria. As far as the Romanian administration was concerned, this transfer, which began in September 1941, was only a halfway stage, and the main objective was to expel them across the river Bug to a region under German control, where they could be exterminated along with the other Soviet Jews. However, the transfer across the Bug was postponed because the German authorities were reluctant to block vital arteries with convoys of Jews. And thus, according to clause 7 of the treaty of Tighina, “Evacuation of the Jews across the River Bug is not possible at the moment. Therefore they must be concentrated in labor camps and put to work until the cessation of hostilities when it would be possible to move them to the East.”¹⁹

DEPORTATION TO TRANSNISTRIA

Administratively, Transnistria was divided into thirteen districts, headed by prefects; the districts were divided into counties headed by pretors. The prefects and pretors came from the nationalist, anti-Semitic circles in Romanian society. The fate of the Jews was determined in Bucharest by Ion Antonescu, although the local Romanian administration also played an important role in the

fate of the Jews. In early September 1941, the Transnistria governor, Alexianu, announced the establishment of a local police force, consisting of Ukrainians and local Moldavians.

Five places along the Dnestr were marked out as crossing places for Jewish transports, and four locations in the vicinity of the Bug were decided upon as places in which Jews would be concentrated until the conditions permitted their transfer eastward across the Bug. The following are the places:

Crossing near Mogilev-Podolsky and concentration in the Pechora region.

Crossing near Yampol and concentration in the Obodovka region.

Crossing near Rybnitsa and concentration in the Krivoe-Ozero region.

Crossing near Tiraspol and concentration in the Bogdanovka region.

Crossing near Ovidiopol and concentration in the Bogdanovka region.

The distance between the crossing places and the region in which Jews had to be concentrated ranged between 100 and 200 kilometers.²⁰ The first to be transferred were the Jews of Bessarabia, and expulsions began on September 12, 1941. The people were made to cover the distance on foot, and only in some cases were Jews allowed to hire a wagon to transport the aged, sick, or infants. The people were ordered to bring food for the journey or to obtain it from villages on the way. They covered an average of 30 kilometers a day on foot. The commanders of the convoys were ordered to shoot any Jews who could not keep up with the convoy.

Between September and November 1941, the roads of Bessarabia, north Bukovina, and Transnistria were filled with long convoys of thousands of hungry and exhausted Jews. Those too weak to continue were shot and left to die; many others fell off the improvised, overpacked rafts crossing the Dnestr and drowned or were pushed off into the water by the guards. The gendarmes accompanying them robbed them of their few possessions, and the Ukrainian police, who joined the guards once they crossed the Dnestr, robbed and tormented the Jews no less than had their Romanian counterparts. At night, the guards would pick out and rape young Jewish girls. The transfer was carried out under conditions of utter chaos; planning was faulty, and no schedule was adhered to. No arrangements had been made for burying the Jews who had died or were murdered along the way, and thousands of corpses were left by the roadside.

The expulsion of the Jews who had been concentrated in camps and ghettos in Bessarabia, except some 10,000 Jews of Kishinev, was completed by the end of September 1941. From Kishinev, the first convoy of Jews, numbering some

1,600, left on October 4. The entire convoy was massacred in the vicinity of the Dnestr, and many bodies were thrown into the river. The expulsion of the town's Jews was completed by the end of October.²¹

On October 11, one day before the deportation began from Bukovina, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, head of the Romanian Jewish community, sent an emotional letter to Ion Antonescu, in which he pointed out that the expulsions constituted death, and he asked for them to cease. In an October 19 response published in the Romanian press, Antonescu accused the Jews of having collaborated with the Soviet enemy in the summer of 1940, when the Romanian army was withdrawing from Bessarabia. Moreover, the Russian Jews were blamed for the Romanian army's losses during the battles for Odessa, which was captured three days before Antonescu's letter was published.²²

The 50,000 Jews of Chernovtsy were forced into a ghetto on October 11, several days before expulsions began from there to Transnistria. The mayor, Traian Popovici, who opposed the expulsion on humanitarian grounds, appealed to Ion Antonescu, pointing out the potential economic harm they posed to the city. Popovici was given permission to leave 20,000 Jews in Chernovtsy. A Romanian committee was responsible for deciding which of the Jews were economically important to the city. Jewish leaders cooperated in preparing the list, which did not lack instances of bribe and nepotism.

The Chernovtsy ghetto was dismantled in December 1941, and its inhabitants were allowed to return to their former homes, which had been stripped of all their contents. The Jews were forced to sign affidavits to the effect that their homes were as they left them, and anyone who refused to sign was deported. Males between the ages of 16 and 60 were sent to work in various camps in Romania. Jewish businesses were confiscated, and artisans were obliged to seek special permits from the authorities in order to continue working at their trade. During and after the expulsions, about 1,500 Jews converted to Christianity in the hope of saving themselves. Shortly afterwards, however, many of these new Christians found themselves under investigation; they were accused of fraud and sentenced to imprisonment.²³

The first transport deportees left north Bukovina on October 12, 1941, and transports continued until mid-November.²⁴ The deportees were taken by train to camp Marculesti in Bessarabia, which turned into a transit camp for Jews from Bukovina. The Jews stayed there for a few days—during which they were robbed of all their property—before being sent to the Atachi pass near Mogilev-Podolsky. From here they were transferred to Transnistria. Ruth Glasberg-Gold from Chernovtsy described the journey thus:

They made us march through deep mud toward the Bessarabian town of Marculesti. . . . Some people came across a trench full of the corpses of men, women, and children piled up on top of each other. According to rumors, these were the murdered Jews from that small township. . . . As we were making our way, I noticed a strange phenomenon. On both sides of the road, there stood snow-covered trees, which had the appearance of human forms. . . . It turned out that these were the swollen, frozen bodies of people from previous transports who had not survived the exhausting march and were left forever by the wayside. . . . We arrived at the edge of the Ukrainian town of Yampol. . . . We entered the first barn, which was already full of people, as well as dead bodies [left behind] from earlier transports. . . . Unavoidably, the dead became an inseparable part of our environment. . . . Several days later, we were ordered to set off again on our way. The only difference was the addition of Ukrainian collaborators. . . . More than anything else, these wanted to rob, to torture and kill. . . . We observed the ongoing drama of families being forced to split up. Breathing with difficulty, a grandfather was torn from his weeping grandson: families were forced to leave behind their dear ones, too enfeebled to continue, condemned to death by the wayside.²⁵

The northern crossings were closer to the transit camps in which Jews were held before being transported to Transnistria. When the deportations began in early September (lasting until mid-October), battles still raged in the Odessa region of south Transnistria, and the roads were required by the military. Thus most of the deportees from Bessarabia and north Bukovina (115,759 of a total of 118,847) crossed the Dnestr at the three northern crossings of Mogilev-Podolsky, Yampol, and Rybnitsa. Only 3,088 crossed at the southern crossings.²⁶ For this reason, too, most of the ghettos and concentration camps were located in northern and central Transnistria. The total number of Jewish deportees included some 21,000 expelled from south Bukovina in October 1941 and some 9,000 expelled during the first half of November from the Dorohoi region. Both these regions were under Romanian rule when Bessarabia and north Bukovina were annexed to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940. However, when the German-Romanian armies conquered north Bukovina, south Bukovina came under the same administration, and the Jews there were doomed to expulsion.

The number of close to 120,000 Jewish deportees to Transnistria was according to official Romanian data, but these appear to underestimate the real figures, since they do not take into consideration all the Jews who crossed to Transnistria or those Jews who died on the way or were drowned while crossing the Dnestr. The number of Jews still in Bessarabia at the beginning of the expulsion in early

September 1941 can be estimated at 80,000. The number of deportees from north Bukovina may be determined as being around 40,000, excluding those 20,000 who were allowed to remain in Chernovtsy. The total number of Jews expelled to Transnistria, including some 30,000 Jews from south Bukovina and Dorohoi, stands at around 150,000.²⁷

Despite plans to do so, no preparations were made to concentrate all the deportees in four large locations near the river Bug. Convoy commanders were forced to leave thousands of Jews in towns, townships, and villages along the deportation roads. Transnistrian governor Alexianu found himself, early in November 1941, responsible for some hundreds of thousands of deported and local Jews, including the Jews of Odessa captured in mid-October, and the need to find them a solution until it would be possible to banish them to the other side of the Bug. The problem was exacerbated by the typhoid epidemic, which was spreading among the deportees, since it also affected the gendarmes accompanying the convoys.

Alexianu sent Antonescu a letter containing a proposal to concentrate the Jews in ghettos and camps temporarily and to exploit them as a labor force. After receiving confirmation from Antonescu on November 11, Alexianu published "Directive No. 23," which defined the conditions for holding the Jews in Transnistria until their expulsion from there. According to the directive, the Jews in Transnistria would be concentrated in settlements (called colonies), "and a Jew who is found without authorization outside his colony will be considered a spy and the laws applicable to a spy during wartime will apply to him."²⁸

The term *settlement* in the directive referred to a ghetto or labor camp. The directive also stipulated that the Jews would be employed in agriculture, road and bridge repairs, etc. They were promised a miniscule daily wage, in the form of food coupons, but this promise was never carried out. According to the directive, the labor camps would come under the control of the Gendarmerie, although the pretors and the Romanian army had broad authority over all matters concerning the Jews. Due to this multiplicity of authority and because of the corruption within the Romanian administration, the fate of the Jews was determined by the good or bad will of those in direct charge of them.

The Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina were concentrated in the regions of Kamenets-Podolski, Tulchin, Balta, and Golta in northern Transnistria and in its center. The deportees were integrated among the local Jewish population that survived the wave of extermination to which they had been subjected. South Transnistria, including Odessa (which became the capital of the Alexianu administration), through which the main supply and transport lines passed on the way to the front line, was destined to be cleansed of Jews.

The expulsion to Transnistria was accompanied by looting and dispossession of Jewish property. On the way, the Jews were disenfranchised “unofficially” by the Gendarmerie and army, and in the camps and points of crossing over the Dnestr they were robbed “officially” by the authorities. Members of the Romanian National Bank were posted in these places to change at the lowest exchange rate all Romanian currency and rubles for special German banknotes, which were of value only in the occupied Soviet territories. Representatives of the bank confiscated anything of value held by the Jews. Large sums of money and valuables found their way into the pockets of the corrupt officials. Apart from the little clothing and whatever objects of value they had managed to hide on themselves, most of the deportees arrived in Transnistria without the minimum means for survival.²⁹

MURDER OF LOCAL JEWS IN TRANSNISTRIA, JULY AND AUGUST 1941

According to the 1939 population census, nearly 320,000 Jews lived in Transnistria on the eve of the German-Romanian invasion (henceforth “local Jews”). Of these some 200,000 lived in the city of Odessa and 80,000 in other towns and townships in the district of Odessa and in the autonomous republic of Moldavia. A little over 40,000 Jews lived in the south Vinnitsa district, which was annexed to Transnistria. The vast majority of the Transnistrian population was Ukrainian and Russian, although the population also included some 300,000 Moldavians (Romanians) and over 125,000 Germans (Volksdeutsche), most of whom inhabited the southern parts of the district. The regions of Transnistria, with the exception of Odessa, were occupied in late July and early August 1941. Following a siege that had begun on August 5, Odessa was captured in October 17, 1941. An estimated 100,000 local Jews remained in the city together with 5,000 to 10,000 Jewish refugees from Bessarabia and the towns of southern Transnistria, who had made it to Odessa and were unable to escape from there. Few Jews had managed to escape from the other parts of Transnistria, because of the early occupation and because the Jews there lived mainly in townships from which evacuation was restricted. Of the 120,000 Jews who had lived there, an estimated 80,000 remained under German occupation. On completion of the occupation of Transnistria, there remained between 180,000 and 185,000 local Jews.

Before being passed over to Romanian rule in early September 1941, Transnistria had been under German military administration. The murder of the local Jews was carried out by Einsatzgruppe D with the assistance of local police and Romanian army units. Several of the Einsatzgruppe D reports for

August 1941 mention the murder of Jews in Transnistria.³⁰ EG D reports dated September 1941 show that its units were already in Ukrainian regions, east of the Bug, outside of Transnistria. Mogilev-Podolsky, the second largest city in Transnistria after Odessa, fell to the German and Romanian armies on July 19, 1941. Its prewar Jewish population numbered around 9,000, and only 4,000 remained under German occupation. The German military administration placed the Jewish population in a ghetto on August 15, 1941. No mention is made in Einsatzgruppen reports or elsewhere of the massacre of the town's Jews.³¹

Tiraspol, the capital of the autonomous Moldavian republic, had a prewar Jewish population numbering some 12,000. The remaining Jewish population, after its capture on August 8, 1941, was between 8,000 and 10,000, including refugees from Bessarabia. The Einsatzgruppen reports make no mention of massacres in Tiraspol. A ghetto was established in late August in Dubossary, in which the region's 6,000 Jews were concentrated. The ghetto was liquidated in September 1941, and its inhabitants were shot outside the town.³²

At least 10,000 local Jews were murdered in August and September. About 70,000 Jews (with the exception of the Jews of Odessa) who remained under German occupation were still alive when Transnistria came under Romanian rule in September 1941.

The German settlements in Transnistria—home to the Volksdeutsche—were placed under the patronage of Germany against the wishes of Romania. Their affairs were dealt with directly by the Main Office for Racial Germans (Vomi—Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle), which was subordinated to Himmler and responsible for extraterritorial Germans. Vomi supported those Germans economically and politically and used them for Nazi-German purposes. In cooperation with the Einsatzgruppen, the Vomi established a special SS unit, called Sonderkommando R, manned by German settlers. Also, German self-defense units (Selbstschutz) were established in the German settlements, and these played an active role in the massacre of Jews in Transnistria.³³

DEATH AND MASS MURDER

Between September 1941 and March 1942, the Jews of Transnistria were caught up in a whirlwind of tragic events. Of the 315,000 to 320,000 Jews who were there at the beginning of this period, some 150,000 were Jewish deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina, and the rest were local Jews and refugees, survivors of the August 1941 wave of massacres. As soon as they took over the administration, the Romanians placed the Jews in ghettos and camps, and Jews between 14 and 60 were used for forced labor. The Jews had to wear a yellow

Star of David on their clothing, and Jewish councils and Jewish police were established in each of the ghettos. In Transnistria the Holocaust was characterized by two parallel processes: thousands of Jews, mainly local, were shot, and thousands of Jews, mainly deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina, died of starvation and disease.

Annihilation of the Odessa Jews

Most of Odessa's surviving Jewish population under German occupation consisted of women, children, and old people. The majority of the men had been mobilized by the army, especially during the siege on the city; they had either fallen in battle or been evacuated by sea along with their military units. The day following the occupation, October 17, 1941, an order was issued for all the city's males to report for registration; 3,000 to 4,000 Jews were taken straight from the point of registration to the jail, where they were tortured before being taken to the seashore and shot by Einsatzkommando 11b and a company of the Romanian Special Intelligence Service.³⁴

At 5:35 p.m. on October 22, 1941, the building that served as the town's Romanian military HQ was blown up. The building, which had formerly housed the local NKVD HQ, had been wired with explosives before the Soviet withdrawal, and a special NKVD team was left behind in the city to blow up the building by remote control. Gen. Ion Glogojeanu, the city's military commander, was killed in the explosion, together with sixteen Romanian officers, dozens of soldiers, and civilians employed by the military. Four German naval officers were also killed in the explosion. Several hours later, the new military commander, General Konstantin Trestoreanu, informed the commander of the Fourth Army that he had taken steps to hang Jews and communists in the city squares. The following afternoon, an order arrived from Ion Antonescu:

For every Romanian or German officer killed in the explosion, 200 communists will be executed, and for every soldier killed, 100 communists [will be executed]. Executions will be carried out [on] October 23. All the communists in Odessa will be taken hostage as well as one person from each Jewish family.³⁵

Locating the city's communists was a lengthy and complicated operation; pointing out the Jews as communists and implementing the order was altogether much easier. The day after the explosion, some 5,000 Jews were caught, shot, or hanged in the city squares and on road junctions, trees, utility poles, and planks tied between two trees in order to provide more hanging room. The massacre was carried out by Romanian soldiers from the Tenth Division and military police.

That day, too, an order was published according to which the Jews were to move the following day to the nearby village of Dalnik. In fact, part of the Jews were sent to Dalnik, and the rest were sent to the municipal jail. Thus, according to an eyewitness account of the march to Dalnik:

Thousands of Jews, men and women, old people and children, marched under armed guard . . . along the streets lined with bodies hanging from gallows. The sick, weak, and handicapped, who could not keep up with the others, were shot on the spot. . . . Thousands of Jews flowed into the courtyard of the old Odessa jail. . . . The other stream [of Jews marched] toward Dalnik. After thousands of Jews had already left the city and arrived in Dalnik, an order arrived that the Jews [those still on their way] were allowed to return to their homes.³⁶

Some 25,000 Jews arrived in Dalnik. The first to arrive were led, in groups of 40 to 50, to antitank trenches and shot by Romanian soldiers. Between 3,000 and 5,000 Jews were shot. When the Romanian command on the spot noticed that this method of killing Jews was too slow, they came up with a more effective method. Several large warehouses stood near the harbor and the Jews were taken there. They were packed into four warehouses and the Romanian soldiers machine-gunned them through the openings and threw in hand grenades. Several hours later, when it became apparent that the Jews had not all been killed, the soldiers doused the outer walls of the warehouses with gasoline and set them alight. And thus, according Romanian lieutenant Alexa Neacsu, an eyewitness:

When the fire broke out, some of the people still inside the warehouses tried to escape by jumping out the windows or climbing over the roof. . . . Some who were [still] inside appeared at the windows, and, as if to escape from the fire, signaled [to the Romanians] to shoot them. . . . Some women threw their children out of the windows.³⁷

The warehouses burned for several days, after which local inhabitants were brought in and ordered to dig deep trenches nearby. In these, the soldiers buried the burnt remains of the murdered Jews. The death toll of that massacre numbered between 20,000 and 22,000.³⁸ Following the Dalnik murders, some 30,000 Jews were banished in late October to Bogdanovka, in the Golta region, near the river Bug and about 150 kilometers from Odessa.³⁹ The Romanians set up some more camps to accommodate Jews in the Golta region; the largest of these were in Domanevka and Akmechetka.

On November 7, an order was published in Odessa, requiring all Jewish men between 18 and 50 were to report immediately to the central jail. Anyone failing to

do so within forty-eight hours was to be shot on the spot. Also, anyone harboring Jews or having knowledge of the whereabouts of Jews and failing to report them to the police did so on penalty of death.⁴⁰

On November 17, 1941, the Jews were given two days in which to report on all the valuables in their possession (precious stones, gold, platinum, silver, etc.). Anyone failing to do so faced a death penalty.⁴¹ November 20, 1941, saw the publication of Romania's definition of "a Jew," which was identical to that adhered to by the Germans authorities in other occupied Soviet territories. Anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent was considered a Jew. Also, anyone who was Arian by race but Jewish by religion was considered a Jew. Jewish spouses in mixed marriages were defined as Jews and subject to all laws and restrictions imposed on Jews. The Romanian definitions did not include the term *Mischlinge*, which was a part of the Nuremberg Laws.⁴²

No acts of mass murder were committed in Odessa in November and December 1941, but the expulsion of Jews to Bogdanovka continued. Around 5,000 were deported, with transports consisting also of groups of Jews who had been held in prison and other groups of military-age Jews, considered by the authorities to be prisoners of war. Jewish refugees from Bessarabia were told that they were being returned to Bessarabia, but they were in fact exiled to Bogdanovka. Deportation to Bogdanovka was conducted on foot, in convoys of thousands of people, and the march lasted two to three weeks. Many of the deportees died or were shot by the Romanian guards.⁴³ By mid-November 1941, some 10,000 Jews deported to Bogdanovka and the villages of Vazdovka and Krivoe Ozero had died of disease.⁴⁴

Following the final transport from Odessa on December 18, 1941, the number of deportees to Bogdanovka was estimated at 55,000, of whom 35,000 were from Odessa. In Bogdanovka, they were held in pig pens, in huts, and in improvised tents, under conditions of terrible overcrowding, appalling filth, and the freezing autumn and winter cold. An outbreak of typhoid fever took the lives of 500 to 700 victims each day. The fever spread to the Romanian and Ukrainian camp guards and later to the region's local population. Since neither the district's governor nor the locally stationed Romanian army units were able to cope with the epidemic, or even to handle the problem of burying thousands of dead in the frozen ground, the Romanian army—and its medical corps in particular—demanded a swift solution to the Jewish problem before the typhoid caught hold among the soldiers.⁴⁵

On December 16, Alexianu was given carte blanche by the Romanian government to dispose of the Jews without having to wait for the Germans to accept them in the territories east of the Bug. In order to prevent the typhoid epidemic from spreading among the local population and the army, the solution was to

murder the Jews in Bogdanovka. The district governor, Col. Modest Isopescu, entrusted the Ukrainian police and a unit of local Volksdeutsche with carrying out the murder.

The murders took place alongside several ravines leading to the river Bug, about 2 or 3 kilometers from the camp. On December 21, 1941, some 4,000 to 5,000 old, infirm Jews and children incapable of marching to the murder site were placed in four pigpens and burned to death. With the cries of the victims ringing in their ears, thousands of Jews were removed from the other pigpens, in groups of 300–400 and taken to a spot near the Bug, where they were shot. The massacre continued from December 21, 1941, until January 9, 1942, with several brief intervals to allow the police to celebrate Christmas and New Year. Before being murdered, the Jews were forced to hand over all their possessions and, even as they stood on the edge of the valley of death, rings were prized off their fingers and gold teeth were torn from their mouths as they were beaten with rifle butts. Apart from the 200 left alive to cremate the bodies of the victims, no Jews remained in Bogdanovka.⁴⁶ The number of Jews shot or burned to death reached 48,000 and, added to the dead in the camp during the previous two months, the total was between 54,000 and 55,000. On completing the cremations, the surviving 200 were sent to work in a local sovkhoz.⁴⁷

On January 2, 1942, as the massacre in Bogdanovka was at its zenith, Alexianu published directive number 35, on behalf of Antonescu, with regard to the expulsion of all the Jews of Odessa:

All the Jews in and around the city of Odessa are being evacuated from this city and being relocated in the northern part of the Ochakov district and in southern parts of the Berezovka district, in settlements determined by the administration. . . . The Jews will live in these settlements at their own expense. They can be exploited for all kinds of work. . . . Evacuation of the Jews will commence on January 10.⁴⁸

The timing of this order was influenced by developments at the front line: the German-Romanian attack on Sevastopol in the Crimea was repulsed, the Soviet army landed in Feodosya in the Crimea during the last days of December 1941, and the Romanian military command feared a further Soviet landing in Odessa. The Romanian chief of staff, Gen. Nikolaya Tatriano, sent a secret telegram on December 28 to the military command in the Odessa region and to the governor of Transnistria, explaining that “due to a troop shortage in Odessa, we may face an unpleasant surprise. A possible catastrophe will befall us because of these Jews, if the Russians land in or near Odessa. Marshal Antonescu said: to hold them would be a crime.”⁴⁹

In order to facilitate rounding up Jews and confiscating their property, the Romanian authorities decided to concentrate them temporarily in a ghetto and to proceed with the evacuation from there. On January 10, 1942, a decree was published in Odessa regarding the establishment of a ghetto in the Slobodka suburb. According to the decree, failure to move into the ghetto was punishable by death, and anyone harboring Jews could expect five to ten years in prison with hard labor.⁵⁰

From the morning of January 10, the streets of Odessa were filled with Jews, mostly children, old people, and women, all making their way toward Slobodka. The sick were carried on stretchers or in wheelbarrows. The streets were lined with soldiers and local hooligans who, from time to time, grabbed parcels from the moving crowd and jeered, “You won’t need this anymore.” The temperature that day was below freezing. Anyone falling behind or unable to continue was shot there on the streets. For weeks afterwards, the frozen, bloodstained bodies of Jews rolled about in the city streets. As a municipality clerk reported on January 25, 1942, to his superiors: “In the region of Zastava P and the old marketplace . . . and on the way to Slobodka, frozen bodies of Jews are lying in the streets. . . . No one is removing the corpses of the Jews. . . . People stop near them and stand to talk.”⁵¹

The Jews were not even allowed their two days in which to move to the ghetto. They were banished from their homes, and neighbors broke in and stole anything they left behind. Since the Jews were to stay in the suburb for only a few days or weeks according to the deportation plan, the Christian inhabitants of Slobodka were not required to vacate their homes. Jews filled the schoolhouse and other public buildings in the neighborhood, but many remained outside in the terrible cold. Within days all their food supplies had run out, and starvation spread among them. Market vendors and non-Jewish inhabitants of Slobodka pushed up the prices of food, and the ghetto inhabitants were obliged to spend the last of their money on food. Some of them crept out in the dark from the ghetto and bought food in the city or received it from their friends. Dozens were caught and murdered. Apart from the hunger, the ghetto was a breeding ground for illness, and a hospital was established at the initiative of Jewish doctors, but this was not enough to prevent the high death toll.⁵² No Jewish council was appointed because of the ghetto’s transience.

Not all the Jews moved to the ghetto. Many of them hid in the city. Hundreds found refuge in the catacombs—the underground labyrinth beneath Odessa, which included tunnels dozens of kilometers long—but it was difficult to survive in them for long. According to David Starodinskii, “We gathered there, about 20 people. . . . We lived in constant fear of being discovered. . . . After three weeks

underground, we were obliged to get out of our hiding place. . . . We decided to go to Slobodka and hand ourselves in to our enemies.”⁵³

The deportation from Slobodka to the districts of Ochakov and Berezovka began on January 12, 1942, two days after the establishment of the ghetto, and continued until early March. The convoys of deportees were made to walk under guard to the Sortirovochnaia railway station, about 10 kilometers out of Slobodka. From there they were taken by freight train to Berezovka, some 83 kilometers away from Odessa. From Berezovka the deportees had to continue on foot to places arranged for them by the local Romanian governors. Old people, women, and children were to be transported, with parcels, on horse-drawn carts.⁵⁴

The number of Jews in Odessa at the start of the expulsion is estimated at 40,000. According to a report dated January 18, 1942, by an officer sent by the HQ of the Third Army to oversee the evacuation of Jews in Odessa, “In accordance with registration, it has been determined that the number of Jews in Odessa is 35,000.”⁵⁵ The discrepancy between the number in Odessa on the eve of evacuation and the number of Jews registered in the ghetto stems from the fact that several thousand Jews did not move to the ghetto but hid in the city.

After the expulsion was completed in March 1942, and the ghetto was disbanded, over 500 Jewish typhoid patients, doctors, and nursing staff remained in the ghetto’s three-story hospital. The Romanians refrained from expelling the sick, and when this became known, more people were helped by the doctors to masquerade as patients in order to avoid expulsion. The hospital with its inhabitants stayed in Odessa until June 1942.⁵⁶

Bloodshed on the Roads and Camps in the Goltia Region

Killings began already on the way from Slobodka to Sortirovochnaia station. The deportees had to cross several kilometers of road flooded with icy water from a Black Sea bay. Many of the deportees were unable to cross; their feet froze, and they could no longer walk. They were shot where they stood. Even the lot of those “fortunates” traveling on wagons was not much better. They were under constant threat that the wagon drivers—many of them Volksdeutsche—would remove them from the wagons, after having made a point of extracting from the old and infirm the last of their money and valuables. This was done in cooperation with the gendarmes, who guarded the convoys and who split the spoils with the wagon drivers. The train ride to Berezovka in packed and freezing freight carriages was, for many, their final journey. When the trains stopped at stations, the gendarmes would burst into the train, hurl out the dead and the dying, pile them up, pour gasoline over them, and set them alight. From Berezovka, the Jews were made to march in a convoy toward Akmechetka and other locations.

The cold, which dropped to 20 degrees below zero Celsius, the food shortage, the age and physical condition of the deportees, and the long distances the Jews were forced to cover caused many to die along the way, and many were shot by the gendarmes who accompanied the convoys.⁵⁷

The small township of Domanevka, between Odessa and Golta, was second to Bogdanovka with regard to the number of murdered Jews. The first deportees from Odessa and elsewhere arrived in Domanevka in December 1941, and by the end of January 1942 some 20,000 Jews were concentrated there. They were held in stables and pigpens, without basic sanitation, and as a result outbreaks of typhoid and dysentery were rife. The dead were piled up in ruined cow sheds, since it was impossible to bury them in the frozen ground, and this provided fodder for dogs and wild animals. And thus, according to Lev Rozhetsky, one of the few who survived Domanevka, “The corpses gradually formed mountains. . . . Old men and women were stacked in the most [outlandish] of poses. A dead mother embraced a dead baby, and the breeze stirred the beards of the old men. I wonder if I had not lost my mind. . . . Domanevka’s dogs grew fat as sheep.”⁵⁸

In order to prevent the spread of disease among the non-Jewish population and the military, the Romanian authorities decided here, too, to murder all the Jews in the camp. The murder was carried out by Romanian gendarmes and local Ukrainian police and began on about January 10 and continued until the end of February. Groups of 300–400 people were taken to the forest near the township, where they were murdered. A total of 18,000 Jews perished in Domanevka. A detail of 50–60 healthy young Jews was selected out of the several hundred survivors of the Domanevka massacres, and it was their job to open the graves and burn the corpses. All that time, groups of Jews caught hiding in Odessa were sent to Domanevka to be shot there.⁵⁹

The village of Akmechetka was located a short distance away from Domanevka, and it was here that mostly women, old people, and children, unfit for work, were sent. They were accommodated in pigpens and a warehouse. Here the Jewish deportees were not shot but died of starvation and diseases. David Starodinskii, who had been sent to Akmechetka and managed to escape, wrote how “thousands of people [were] cut off from the world, with no food, sentenced to death through starvation. The first to die were the men, whose constitutions were weaker than those of the women. There was no one to bury the dead.”⁶⁰ During the months of the camp’s existence, until early 1942, the death toll there reached between 7,000 and 8,000.⁶¹

In late February the mass murder of Jews was interrupted in camps under Romanian control. At the same time, the expulsion from the Slobodka ghetto in Odessa was completed. Jews remaining in ghettos and camps were now sent by the

Romanian authorities to labor camps, and many of them were doomed to die of starvation or sickness. But the executions had not ceased entirely, and thousands of Jewish inhabitants of the various labor camps in the region of Berezovka were shot after March 1942. The murders were carried out by the German police units stationed in the German settlements in the Berezovka area, together with the Volksdeutsche Sonderkommando R, which operated in the region. According to the Romanian Gendarmerie report dated March 18, 1942, German police in Berezovka executed 483 Jews. The March 24 report mentioned that 772 Jews had been shot at the Chihrin camp on March 9. According to the same report, the ss (meaning Sonderkommando R) executed 650 Jews from the Hulievka camp on March 13 and took the victims' money and clothing for themselves. According to a June 1942 report, 1,200 Jews were murdered in late May at the Sukha Verba kolkhoz by members of the German police stationed at the village of Likhtenfeld.⁶² Another source details more places in the districts of Veselinovka, Mostovoe, and Berezovka, where in March 1942 more than 5,700 Jews from Odessa were murdered. In April 600 Odessa Jews were murdered there.⁶³ According to these sources, the total number of Odessa Jews to be shot—most of them in March 1942—stood at more than 9,500.⁶⁴

Starvation and Disease: Mass Deaths

The suffering and massive death tolls continued in northern and central Transnistria, too, among the local Jews as well as those who had been deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina. In Bershad, south of Tulchin, and its vicinity, the death toll from typhoid fever reached 20,000, or 80 percent of the region's Jewish population. As Ruth Glasberg-Gold wrote in her memoir:

Quietly, with no emotional outbursts, with no tears, one after the other, people died all around us. . . . There was no escaping death. . . . When there were too many dead, and the frozen earth prevented the digging of graves, the corpses were piled on the frozen earth. . . . Weeks went by without our being able to wash or change clothes. . . . The result was that the typhoid invaded our bodies at a frightening rate and turned into the main cause of death, after which came starvation, dysentery, freezing to death, and death at the hands of the Ukrainians. . . . Within a few weeks only six remained of the twenty who had packed our crowded room.⁶⁵

The situation was similar in hundreds of other camps and ghettos into which the exiles from Bessarabia and Bukovina had been brought. In the Transnistrian town of Shargorod, 1,449 of the 2,414 sick people died; in Mogilev-Podolsky, 3,500 of the 7,000 patients perished; in the Tatarovka ghetto between Balta and

Tulchin, only 200 to 300 deportees remained of 1,200; in Tropovo, half of the 1,200 deportees died in the typhoid epidemic.⁶⁶ In November 1941 the Jewish population of Tulchin was still around 3,000. They were banished to Pechora, in the vicinity of the river Bug. Michael Bartik, one of the deportees from Tulchin, described events in the Pechora camp: "Death cut us down. It was hard to look at the human corpses. My brother was unable to bear the suffering and expired. After him, my father, eight cousins, their mother and father all died. Of so large a family, no one remained. A cousin was shot trying to escape. Entire families would disappear. Very few were able to escape and survive."⁶⁷

The number of Jews who died or were murdered in Transnistria because of the cruel conditions under which they were forced to live from early September 1941, when the region came under Romanian control, and up to the spring of 1942 can only be estimated. Of the 170,000 to 175,000 local Jews who resided throughout Transnistria, including Odessa (and including refugees from Bessarabia), at the time the Romanians assumed control of the region, between 140,000 and 145,000 were murdered between early September 1941 and the spring of 1942.⁶⁸ According to this estimate, the number of local Jews in Transnistria still alive in the spring stood at around 25,000. This number included hundreds of Jews who remained in Odessa, including more than 500 in the small ghetto still existing in Slobodka, and the rest were Jews who had adopted an Aryan identity and were in hiding inside the city or in the catacombs.

The Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and the Dorohoi region who had been banished to Transnistria from the beginning of September 1941 to late March 1942 had been dispersed to more than 150 ghettos and camps in central and north Transnistria. Those seven months were the harshest for them, and over half of them perished during that period. An official Romanian census of the Jewish population, conducted in March 1942, counted 88,187 Jews, including deportees from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dorohoi, as well as local Jews. The results of the census were presented to the Romanian government in May 1942.⁶⁹ Assuming that not all the Jews were included in the census, it may be estimated that their number was between 90,000 and 95,000. Based on an estimate that some 25,000 local Jews were still living in Transnistria at that time, the number of Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dohoroi still alive at the time of the census can be estimated at 65,000 to 70,000, out of the 150,000 banished from those regions, and the number of dead was between 80,000 and 85,000. The overall number of Jews who were murdered or who died in the terrible conditions in Transnistria from the beginning of the occupation to the spring of 1942 is estimated at between 240,000 and 245,000, of whom two-thirds were local Jews.

FIVE

Mass Murder, Second Stage:
From Spring to Late 1942

18

The Killing Actions in Ostland and the Grodno-Volkovysk Region (Generalbezirk Bialystok)

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT BELORUSSIA

Unlike in other parts of Ostland, most of the Jewish population of Generalkommissariat Belorussia was still alive by the end of winter 1941/42. The winter, which was particularly harsh that year, saw a marked reduction in the number of massacres, especially because of the difficulty involved in digging graves in the frozen earth.

The mass murder of Jews in Generalkommissariat Belorussia was resumed in March 1942. At that time, ghetto Minsk, the largest in Belorussia, had a population of about 49,000 Jews, including the 7,000 brought there from the Reich. Throughout the winter months, the Germans had continued to murder individuals and small groups of Jews. In late February 1942 the German authorities ordered the Jewish council to concentrate 5,000 nonworking Jews for deportation on March 2, 1942. News of this order spread through the ghetto, via the underground and Jewish police. Experience had taught the ghetto Jews that the fate of the deported was extermination.¹ Many of the ghetto population went into hiding. When it became obvious on March 2 that the Jewish police had not fulfilled the demand for 5,000 people, German security forces consisting of Belorussians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians burst into the ghetto and began kidnapping people, including orphanage children, people in the home for the handicapped, and some members of the Jewish council and their families. Even people returning to the ghetto from their work were kidnapped in order to fill the quota. Many people were shot trying to hide or escape. The kidnapped Jews—altogether more than 5,000—were taken to a large pit on Ratomska Street inside the city and shot.²

On March 3, 1942, German, Belorussian, and Lithuanian police entered the Baranovichi ghetto, which still housed some 18,000 Jews. The Jews were ordered

to concentrate in one part of the ghetto, which was then surrounded by armed guards. Six thousand new certificates were distributed among the artisans and people (and their families) employed in German enterprises, and these were transferred to the empty part of the ghetto. Since many of the Jews had gone into hiding, the Belorussian police began a house-to-house search of the ghetto. More than 2,300 Jews were caught, taken out of town to the “green bridge” area, and shot. After the massacre, Jews were brought to ghetto Baranovichi from neighboring townships.³

According to the March 9, 1942, Einsatzgruppen report: “During an action against the Jews carried out on March 2 and 3, 3,412 Jews were executed in Minsk, 302 in Vileika, and 2,007 in Baranovichi. In all, a total of 5,721 Jews were executed.”⁴ These numbers did not include the Jews who were murdered inside the ghettos, which is probably the cause for the discrepancy between the numbers in Jewish sources and those in the German report. Killing actions were conducted in other places, too.⁵

A wave of killing actions washed over the entire area of Generalkommissariat Belorussia during the spring of 1942. Thus, according to the May 27, 1942, report of a Sipo unit operating in Gebietskommissariat Vileika:

During April 29–30 . . . as the action in Dolginovo was under way, we discovered that the Jews had built bunkers in which to hide during actions. For days we were obliged to search these bunkers and blow them up with hand grenades. We returned [to Vileika] on April 30. . . . On May 10, we carried out an action against the Jews of Volozhin. Here, unlike the Jews in Dolginovo, the Jews were unprepared for the action. We devoted the days following to antipartisan warfare. . . . We had no success. . . . On the night of May 20–21, our unit returned to Dolginovo. . . . The following day we carried out a third action in Dolginovo. In this way, the Jewish problem was solved absolutely in this town.⁶

It would appear from this report that the Sipo unit in Vileika failed in its fight against the partisans, but “succeeded” in murdering Jews. According to the testimony of a Sipo member who participated in massacres in Vileika region, 500 to 600 Jews were murdered in the township of Vileika, in Dolginovo some 2,000, in Ilya some 1,500, and in Volozhin around 2,000 Jews. Untersturmführer Georg Grabe commanded the Sipo unit which, aided by local police forces, carried out these killing actions.⁷

On May 8, 1942, in Lida, 5,670 Jews were removed from the ghetto and murdered in the forest about 2 kilometers out of town. In the ghetto, 1,500 working people and their families remained. Around 10,000 Jews were murdered between

May 8 and May 12 in townships in the Lida area. All the area's remaining 2,000 Jews were subsequently brought to Lida.⁸ Large-scale killing actions were also carried out in Gebietskommissariat Glubokoye. And thus, according to a July 1, 1942, report sent by Gebietskommissar Glubokoye to Wilhelm Kube:

Untersturmführer Heinz Tangerman of the SD in Lepel arrived on May 27, 1942. . . . His mission was to cleanse the army's rear areas, which had been transferred to civilian administration, of Jews. The prevalent opinion, and rightly so, is that the Jews are maintaining ties with the partisans. . . . On May 29, the Dokshytse ghetto was liquidated along with its 2,653 strong Jewish population. The Jews in the ghetto had been so good at hiding that it took a full week to find the last of them. . . . On June 1, 1942, the Luzhki ghetto was liquidated, with 528 Jews, and the Plissa ghetto, with 419 Jews. The following day the Miory ghetto, with 779 Jews, was liquidated. [In Miory] an effort made at mass escape, and 70 to 80 people apparently managed to get away. No special problems were encountered on June 3, 1942, when the ghetto in the county town of Braslav, in the northwest of the region, was liquidated along with its 2,000 Jews. The SD unit returned from Lepel, after a break of eight or nine days, this time reinforced by the Gendarmerie from Vileika, in order to liquidate the ghettos in the eastern part of our county. Immediately after being surrounded, fires broke out simultaneously in various parts of the two ghettos in Disna, with its 2,181 Jews, and in Druya, with 1,318 Jews. Both ghettos burned completely. . . . In Druya the fire spread to houses outside of the ghetto. . . . As the fire was being extinguished, shots were fired at the SD and police. In the action in Sharkovshchina, on the same day, Jews again set fire [to the houses]. Thanks to the rain, the fire did not spread further. Here, too, some Jews managed to burst through the encirclement and escape. Finally, an action was carried out in Glubokoye. Here artisans, almost all of whom were employed by the army, were left. More than 2,200 Jews were shot there. There still remained the ghettos in Dunilovichi, with 979 Jews, in Postavy, with 848 Jews, in Glubokoye, with 2,200, and the Opsa ghetto, with 300 Jews.⁹

It is obvious from this report that the annihilation of Jews was encountering difficulty and resistance. Aware of Germany's extermination policies from their experiences in the late 1941 wave of massacres, the Jews began to show active resistance. The chaos created by the fires in Disna, Druya, and Sharkovshchina was exploited for an attempt at mass escape. Indeed, some of the Jews managed to get away by bursting through the ring of guards surrounding the ghettos. In Druya, Jews used firearms against Germans and local police forces who were liquidating the ghetto. Rumors of partisan activity in the forests—which were often

grossly exaggerated — encouraged the Jews to believe that they had a chance of survival in the forests and provided them with a direction to escape. The German administration was aware of the Jews' escape from the ghettos into the forests. The Einsatzgruppen report for April 1942 emphasized that Jews were arrested because of their ties with the partisans, and it mentioned the escape of about 100 Jews from the Minsk ghetto to join the partisans.¹⁰ This matter was of concern to the German authorities. As Generalkommissar Kube wrote in a document to the Gebietskommissars on July 10, 1942, regarding Jewish artisans and workers:

I realized that in Belorussia the economic value of Jewish artisans and workers bears no proportion to the harm caused by the Jews' support of the partisans. I would ask you, therefore, to use the severest criteria, in collaboration with the Sipo, to check the essentiality of using such a number of Jewish workers as have been employed up to now, and request that you separate all the Jewish artisans and workers who are not economically essential. Furthermore, the Jewish professional workers are to be kept under severe barracks conditions, with the mandatory separation between the sexes.¹¹

The annihilation of Jews in the Slonim ghetto, which housed 10,000 to 12,000 Jews, including several thousand from neighboring townships, took place between June 29 and July 15. Prior to the murder action, in May, 500 Jewish men had been sent to work in the east Belorussian town of Mogilev, where no Jews existed. On June 29 at dawn, the ghetto was surrounded by local police reinforced by a unit of Lithuanian police. The ghetto inhabitants hurried into their hiding places; on the first day of the action, some 2,000 Jews were caught and taken 7 kilometers east of the city, to Petrolevich, where they were shot. Many Jews were killed when hand grenades were thrown into their hiding places, and many more were shot trying to escape. The massacre and the manhunts continued until July 15. Between 8,000 and 10,000 Jews were murdered in Slonim. When the action was over, fewer than 1,000 Jews remained; most of these were artisans. About 400 of them were murdered on August 20, and a few hundred more escaped to the forests. The last Jews in Slonim were shot in December 1942.¹² According to Alfred Metzner, a German interpreter and chauffeur for the Slonim Gebietskommissar, who participated in the massacre:

The guards who led the Jews to the murder sites consisted of local police. . . . The murder unit was composed of Latvian volunteers and ss personnel. They were given alcohol and cigarettes to ensure that they do their jobs properly. This time I didn't take part in the executions, because I drove between 10 and 20 carloads of 30 to 40 Jews each time to the murder site. . . . Many of the Jews were only wounded, because the members of the murder unit were too

drunk. The Jews dragged themselves, naked and bleeding all around . . . and were shot by the local police. . . . There was a meeting with Gebietskommissar Gert Erren in the evening to sum up the day's events. He praised many of the participants and those who had shown some weakness were reprimanded and told to improve their future performance. At the end of the conversation, we drank and celebrated. . . . In Shirovichi [a suburb of Slonim], between 1,200 and 1,400 ghetto Jews were executed. . . . I was present at this action and took part in the shooting. . . . Actions were carried out also in other places. In Kozlovshchiny, between 700 and 800 Jews were murdered, in Derechin, 2,000 to 3,000 people, in Golyinka, 400 to 500 Jews, in Byten, 3,000 to 4,000 Jews. . . . Soldiers and railway workers from the Slonim station volunteered, since they could earn something from participating in the executions. Clothes and valuables were removed.¹³

In his testimony, Metzner stressed the involvement of Gebietskommissar Erren in these massacres and pointed out that Erren was known as the "Bloody Gebietskommissar."

The Kletsk ghetto, which still housed about 1,500 Jews, was liquidated on July 21, 1942. During the massacre, Jews set fire to the ghetto, burst through the fences, and tried to escape. But only a handful managed to make it to the forest and join the partisans.¹⁴

In the Minsk ghetto, limited killing actions had taken place incessantly. These happened mostly at night and were coined "night actions." The pattern was similar in all of them: German and local policemen would burst into the ghetto, surround one or more houses, remove the inhabitants, and take them off to the murder site. On some nights, the number of murdered reached 500. On these nights actions, the Germans made use of gas vans.

In May 1942, the Germans surrounded two houses on Zavalna Street and set them on fire. The inhabitants were burned alive. These night massacres, in which an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 people were murdered, kept the ghetto Jews in a state of constant terror and came in retaliation for the discovery of underground activity in the ghetto or the escape of Jews to join the partisans.¹⁵ In March 1942 the Germans arrested Jewish council chairman Mushkin and ghetto police chief Zyama Serebryansky and accused them of collaborating with the ghetto and city underground movements. The two were executed, and Moshe Ioffe was appointed Jewish council chairman.

On June 27, 1942, all Jews were ordered by the Sipo in Minsk to wear an identity badge with their house numbers on their clothing, in addition to their yellow patch. The working Jews had to wear a red badge, and the others wore a green one. These badges were distributed in preparation for a killing action. On

July 28, the ghetto inhabitants, including those from the Reich, were ordered to report to Yubilee Square, supposedly in order to exchange the green badges for red ones. Groups of workers left the ghetto as usual. A woman from the ghetto described what happened that morning:

I rushed up to the attic. From there I could see the pogrom continue. . . . At noon everyone left within the boundaries of the ghetto was herded into Yubilee Square. In the square enormous tables were decorated as if for a holiday. . . . In the center sat Adolf Richter, the [Sipo] head of the ghetto. . . . The fascists forced the chairman of the Jewish council, the composer Ioffe, to speak from a platform. Deceived by Richter, Ioffe began to calm the frantic crowd, saying that today the Germans would only conduct a registration and exchange identity badges. He had hardly finished talking when covered trucks with gassing equipment drove into the square. Ioffe realized what this meant and shouted, "Gassing trucks." The terrible phrase passed like lightning through the frantic crowd: "Comrades, I was deceived. They are going to kill you!" The insane crowd scattered, seeking salvation from the terrible death. . . . The fascists opened a steady stream of fire. . . . The entire square was littered with bodies and reddened with blood. This continued until late evening. . . . On August 1, after the massacre was over, the Gestapo sent out an order to the factories where the Jewish workers had been kept during the four-day pogrom, directing that they return to their homes in the ghetto. . . . The people ran to their apartments hoping to find their relatives safe in their hiding places. But the hiding places in the stoves, under the floor, between the walls had been ripped open by the grenades. All the workers found there were the remains of their families, who had been ripped to pieces by the grenades. The majority, however, did not find even remains. Their loved ones had been taken in the gassing vans to Trostinets and Tuchinka.¹⁶

This massacre lasted until July 31, 1942, and between 25,000 and 30,000 Jews were murdered, including 3,000 to 3,500 German Jews. Between 10,000 and 12,000 Jews remained in the ghetto.¹⁷ According to the testimony of Sipo Untersturmführer Franz Hess from Minsk, who participated in this action, three or four gas vans were used and 20 to 30 more trucks transported the people to the murder site. According to him, 18,000 Jews were murdered in this action.¹⁸ This number does not include the thousands of Jews murdered in Yubilee Square and in hiding places in the ghetto. Apart from the German and Sipo and Orpo and Belorussian police, in this action participated soldiers from the Wehrmacht antiaircraft artillery unit and 100 to 200 German railroad workers, employed in bringing the victims to the murder sites at Malyi-Trostiniets and to Petrashewichi northwest of Minsk.¹⁹

In Slutsk, south of Minsk, there were two separate ghettos; in March 1942 the Polevoe ghetto was liquidated with all its 1,000 “nonessential” Jews. Some 5,000 Jews remained in the Gorodskoe ghetto. In Kopyl and Timkovichi, west of Slutsk, the last of the ghetto Jews were exterminated between March and July.²⁰ On July 31, 1942, Generalkommissar Kube submitted a report to Reichskommissar Lohse, entitled “Combating Partisans and Action against Jews in the Generalbezirk Belorussia”:

In all the clashes with the partisans in Belorussia it has been proved that Jewry . . . is the main bearer of the partisan movement. . . . In consequence the treatment of Jewry in Belorussia is a matter of political importance owing to the danger to the whole economy. [The issue] must therefore be solved in accordance with political considerations. . . . We have liquidated about 55,000 Jews in Belorussia in the past 10 weeks. . . . Without contacting me, the Army Rear Area Command liquidated 10,000 Jews. . . . In the city of Minsk about 10,000 Jews were liquidated on July 28 and 29. . . . In Baranovichi there are still another 10,000 Jews of whom 9,000 will be liquidated next month. In the city of Minsk about 2,600 Jews from Germany have remained, in addition to the 6,000 Russian Jews and Jewesses. . . . In the future, too, in Minsk will remain the largest Russian Jewish element. . . . When the remaining planned actions have been completed, there will be 8,600 Jews in Minsk and about 7,000 Jews in the ten other districts. There will then be no further danger of the partisans being able to rely to any real extent on Jewry. . . . I and the SD would like it best if Jewry in Generalbezirk Belorussia was finally eliminated. . . . For the time being the essential requirements of the Wehrmacht, the main employer of Jews, are being taken into consideration.²¹

According to this report, all the Jews in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, except those 15,000 to 16,000 workers essential to the war effort (this number included their families), were or would be “liquidated.” Half of the workers essential to the war effort would remain in Minsk and the remainder in the ten districts in which there were Gebietskommissars, in each of them only 700 Jews.²² Kube gave no ideological rationalization for the murder of Jews at this time. He explained the need for exterminating Jews for the role they played in the partisan movement. It was only the Wehrmacht’s need for working hands that prevented him from totally annihilating the Jewish population.

The planned massacres mentioned in Kube’s report did indeed take place: one in Baranovichi on September 22, and another on December 17, 1942, in which 6,000 Jews were murdered. In accordance with Kube’s quota, 700 Jews remained in the town.²³ In Novogrudok, home to several thousand Jews, some of

whom came from neighboring townships, 2,500 Jews were murdered on August 8, 1942, and 1,200 workers remained after the massacre.²⁴

Ghetto Jews were the main victims in the antipartisan operations of that period. According to a German report on the antipartisan operation known as “Sumpffieber” (swamp fever), in late August and early September 1942 in the southeastern regions of Generalkommissariat Belorussia, north of the Polesie swamps, “the following were the operation’s achievements—49 partisan bases were purged and liquidated . . . 389 armed criminals [meaning partisans] were killed in battle, 1,274 suspects were shot, 8,350 Jews were executed, 1,217 people were deported.”²⁵

By the end of 1942, an estimated 15,000 to 16,000 “legal” Jews remained in Generalkommissariat Belorussia in ghettos and in labor camps in the region’s large towns and cities. A further 6,000 to 7,000 “illegal” Jews had managed to survive by hiding in *malinas*, and some thousands escaped into the forests and joined the partisans.

AREAS OF SOUTHWEST BELORUSSIA IN GENERALBEZIRK BIALYSTOCK

The spring and summer months of 1942, during which thousands of Jews were massacred in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, were relatively peaceful for the Jews who lived in the ghettos of southwest Belorussia in the Grodno and Volkovysk districts, which were part of Generalbezirk Bialystock. But even during this period of “relative quiet,” groups of Jews were murdered by Police battalion 91, which operated in the region.²⁶

In early October 1942 the RSHA ordered the Sipo commander in Generalbezirk Bialystock, Dr. Wilhelm Altenloh, to liquidate the ghettos in his area and send the Jews to extermination camps in the General Government. Following intervention on the part of military and civilian authorities, who employed Jews in enterprises serving the war economy, it was decided to postpone the liquidation of the Bialystock ghetto but to proceed with the liquidation of the other ghettos. On November 2, 1942, control of the region’s ghettos was transferred from civilian administration to the Sipo, and the expulsions began.²⁷ Before being sent to the death camps in the General Government, the Jews were concentrated in collection camps (*Sammellager*).

Most of the Jews from the Grodno region were concentrated in the Kelbasin camp, about 5 kilometers away from Grodno. Transfer of the Jews to Kelbasin began in early November 1942 and continued for several weeks. In the camp people lived in covered dugouts known as *Zemlyanka*, each of which accommodated

several hundred Jews. Around 35,000 Jews were brought to the camp from ghettos in the Grodno region and several thousand more from Grodno itself.²⁸ Between November 9 and December 20, between 35,000 and 36,000 of the camp's Jews were deported by train to the Treblinka death camp.²⁹ Transports were arranged according to towns and townships from which the Jews had been brought to the camp. Prior to embarking on the trains, the Jews were ordered to hand over all the money and valuables in their possession — under penalty of death.³⁰

Between 22,000 and 23,000 Jews inhabited the two ghettos in Grodno. Evacuation began with the liquidation of ghetto number 2, in which mostly “useless” Jews lived. On November 9, some 4,000 Jewish workers and their families who were in ghetto number 2 were transferred to ghetto number 1. The transfer continued for several days. Two transports of Jews, with 4,000 to 5,000 people, left ghetto number 2 on November 15 and November 21, 1942, after which the ghetto was liquidated. The deportees were told that they were being sent to work in Upper Silesia, but they were actually being sent to Auschwitz. On arrival, they were given postcards to send to their relatives in Grodno. The printed text informed its recipient that the sender was being well cared for, was employed, and was feeling good. After selection, about 80 percent of the people on the transports were taken straight to the gas chambers. The rest stayed in the camp and were put to work.³¹

Around 17,000 Jews remained in Grodno ghetto number 1. In late November and early December 1942, two transports of 4,000 to 5,000 Jews left this ghetto for Kelbasin. On orders from the Sipo, the transports included several members of the Jewish council and the commander of the ghetto police, who were suspected of disobeying the Germans. Between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews were returned to the Grodno ghetto after the Kelbasin camp was disbanded, and transports ceased due to a shortage of trains.³²

Jews from ghettos in the Volkovysk area were concentrated in a collection camp in Volkovysk. Between November 10 and December 15, 16,300 Jews were sent from that camp to Treblinka and some 2,000 to Auschwitz.³³

Transports of Jews from Generalbezirk Bialystok to the death camps ceased in mid-December 1942. In the wake of military defeat on the Stalingrad front, the army needed all available trains. Already in early December the German railroad authorities informed the Sipo that allocations of trains for transporting Jews from Generalbezirk Bialystock would stop between December 15 and January 15, 1943. Himmler intervened personally on this matter, and in a letter dated January 23 to Dr. Theodor Ganzenmuller, director of the German railways, he wrote that “a precondition for bringing peace to Generalbezirk Bialystock and other Russian territories is the deportation of those who are aiding the gangs or

are suspected of belonging to them. This includes above all else deportation of the Jews. . . . Here I need your help. . . . I must have more trains for transport. . . . Help me and supply me the trains.”³⁴

In this letter Himmler justified the urgent need to exterminate the Jews by stressing their ties with the partisans. In the harsh reality of Germany’s defeat in Stalingrad, only military reasoning, such as the prevention of partisan activity rather than racist ideology, had the power to persuade the relevant authorities to allocate trains, which were so needed by the army, to transport Jews to death camps. Himmler’s request was granted, and the Sipo received the trains.

A large deportation took place from Grodno on January 18–22, 1943. Beforehand, a list of some 2,700 workers and their families had been drawn up, consisting of Jews most essential to the workforce. Over five days, some 11,500 Jews were deported by train, most of them to Auschwitz, some to Treblinka. Some 5,000 Jews remained in the ghetto, a little under half of whom were there illegally, in hiding. On February 11, the German authorities informed the Jewish council chairman, Dr. Brauer, that they needed workers and that all the ghetto’s illegal inhabitants were required to report for work details. And indeed, several hundred Jews came out of hiding in the hope of finding employment. The last deportation of about 4,000 Jews left Grodno for Auschwitz on February 13–16; at the end of it the Grodno Sipo shot Dr. Brauer. About 1,200 Jews remained in Grodno, half of them illegally.³⁵ They were transferred on March 12, 1943, to the Bialystock ghetto. Thus, except for the ghetto in Bialystock, all the ghettos in Generalbezirk Bialystock were liquidated.

On January 28, 1943, close to 10,000 Jews from Pruzhany ghetto (south of Grodno) were taken to the Lonowo station and transported from there to Auschwitz.³⁶ On February 5–12, some 10,000 people were deported from the Bialystock ghetto to the death camps.³⁷ At least 64,000 Jews were deported from the districts of Grodno and Volkovysk to the death camps in Auschwitz and Treblinka between November 9, 1942, and February 19, 1943.³⁸

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LITHUANIA, LATVIA, AND ESTONIA

Most of the Jews of the Baltic countries had been annihilated during the second half of 1941. Those remaining in the ghettos of Lithuania and Latvia were classified as essential workers. No Jews remained alive in Estonia. For the Jews of Lithuania and Latvia, 1942 was a year of relative quiet, but here, too, the German murder machine had not come to a complete standstill, and several thousand “nonessential” Jews were murdered in the course of various

actions. In Vilna, whose Jewish population numbered some 20,000, the Jewish council was ordered in early July 1942 to hand over 500 old people and children. After negotiations with Jewish council chairman, Jacob Gens, the German Sipo agreed to relinquish their demand for children and reduce to 100 their demand for old people. The Jewish police arrested 84 old people, mostly terminally ill or paralyzed, and handed them over to the German Sipo and the Lithuanian police on July 26, 1942. They were taken to Panerai and murdered.³⁹

On April 1, 1942, three districts that had previously belonged to Generalkommissariat Belorussia—Eishiskes, Oshmany, and Svir—were annexed to Generalkommissariat Lithuania and became part of Gebietskommissariat Vilnius-Land. Up until then, the Jewish populations of the local townships had been only slightly affected by earlier actions. The German administration decided to reduce the Oshmany ghetto, in which some 4,000 local and neighboring Jews were concentrated, and to exterminate 1,500 unemployed women, children, and old people. To this end, the Sipo ordered the Jewish council and Jewish police in Vilnius to select the victims. Gens acquiesced to this demand. He justified himself and described the events in Oshmany at a meeting of Jewish public figures in the Vilnius ghetto on October 27, 1942, several days after the murder action:

Friends, I have invited you here in order to tell you about one of the greatest tragedies of Jewish life—when Jews lead Jews to death. A week ago Martin Weiss [the Sipo member in charge of the ghetto] came and ordered us on behalf of the SD to proceed to Oshmany. He said that there were about 4,000 Jews in the ghetto there and that the people for whom the Germans had no need should be picked out and shot. First priority are women and their children whose husbands had been abducted. Second priority were families with many children. When we received the order we answered: At your command [Zum befall]. Dessler and the Jewish police left for Oshmany. The Jewish police informed the Gebietskommissar in Vilnius that, first of all, it was impossible to send away the women whose husbands had been kidnapped, as they were working, and secondly, there were no families with four or five children. I forgot to add: We had been ordered to select at least 1,500 people. We haggled, and the figure was reduced to 800. After I had gone with Weiss to Oshmany, the quota dropped once again to 600. . . . The truth is that 406 elderly were collected in Oshmany and were handed over. . . . It is incumbent upon us to save the strong and the young. The Jewish police rescued all those who had to live . . . and these aged Jews forgive us, they were sacrificed for our Jews and our future. I am only sorry today that we were absent at the time of the *aktionen* in Kemelishki and Bystrytse. All the Jews there, without any excep-

tion, were shot last week. . . . I don't know if all will understand and justify it when we come out from the ghetto. But this is the point of view of our police: to save what is possible, without regard for our good name. . . . From you, my friends, I expect moral support.⁴⁰

The 406 selected Jews were handed over to German and Lithuanian police and shot in the vicinity of Oshmany.

It was an extraordinary act in Holocaust history, in which, in order to minimize the number of victims and to save the lives of women and children, Jacob Gens, leader of the Jewish council in Vilnius, made a conscious decision to cooperate with the Germans in carrying out a murder action. Moreover, Gens hints that, had the Jewish ghetto police in Vilnius undertaken to carry out the selection in Kemelishki and Bystrytse, it would have been possible there, too, to limit the murders to old people, and the annihilation of those ghettos could have been avoided.

The 6,000 Jews left alive after the late 1941 actions in Generalkommissariat Latvia were concentrated in three ghettos in Riga, Daugavpils, and Liepaja. About 4,000 Latvian Jews occupied the small ghetto in Riga. The large ghetto housed Jews deported from Germany.

Fewer than 1,000 Jews lived in the Daugavpils ghetto. After the workers had left the ghetto on the morning of May 17, 1942, about 500 people, most of whom were not employed by the German authorities, were taken out of town and shot. About 400 Jews remained in the town.⁴¹ Around 1,000 Jews lived in Lepaja. In February 1942 about 100 unemployed Jews were murdered. Due to a housing shortage, a ghetto was established in Liepaja only in June 1942.⁴²

Throughout 1942, the exterminations in the Baltic countries were carried out on a smaller scale than in Generalkommissariat Belorussia. This notwithstanding, the “relatively quiet” year managed to claim several thousand victims from among those Jews deemed by the Germans to be unsuitable to join the workforce: women, children, and the elderly.

I9

Annihilation in Reichskommissariat Ukraine

GENERALBEZIRK VOLHYNIA-PODOLIA

Following the first stage of the annihilation, which ended in the winter of 1941–42, a large concentration of Jews still remained in Volhynia-Podolia. Most of these lived in Volhynia and Polesie, in territories that were formerly Polish and in which, by early 1942, there still lived an estimated 270,000 to 290,000 Jews.¹ The Jewish population of Podolia, in the eastern regions of the Generalbezirk, was about 20,000.

The Volhynia-Podolia Gebietskommissars met in Lutsk to discuss the extermination of the Jews. The office of the Generalkommissar issued a letter on August 31, 1942, according to which “the *Aktionen* in this region . . . would be completed within five weeks. . . . The general-director of the Reichskommissariat government, Paul Dargel, told those present that the Reichskommissar [Koch] himself had expressed his personal and ardent wish that the cleanup be 100 percent thorough. The Gebietskommissars are to act accordingly.”²

This letter referred to the total annihilation of Jews in the Generalbezirk. Executions of Jews in Volhynia had begun in May 1942, some months before the Lutsk conference, and orders to this effect had already been passed through the command channels of the security police in the early spring of 1942.

The ghetto in Dubno, which housed over 5,000 Jews, was split in mid-May into two parts: one for artisans and their families and the other for everyone else. The second ghetto was liquidated and its inhabitants were murdered May 26–27. In August Jews were brought to the ghetto from neighboring towns, and the number of its inhabitants reached around 4,500. These Jews, too, were murdered in the course of two actions during October 1942.³ German engineer Herman Graebe was an eyewitness to the October 5, 1942, massacre. In his testimony at the Nuremberg trials, he described it thus:

The people undressed in silence, neither weeping nor screaming. They stood in family groups, kissed each other, said their farewells, and waited for a signal from the ss man, who stood near the pit with a whip in his hand. I stood near the pit. I heard no one complain or beg for mercy. I watched a family of about eight, a man and a woman, both about 50, with their children, aged about 8 and 10 and a 12-month-old baby and two grown-up daughters of about 20 to 24. An old woman with snow-white hair was holding the baby in her arms, singing to it and tickling it. The child was crowing with delight. The man and wife looked on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding his 10-year-old son's hand and talking to him softly. The boy fought back his tears. The father pointed to the sky, stroked the boy's head, and seemed to be explaining something. At that moment the ss man at the pit shouted something to his comrade, who separated off about twenty persons and ordered them to go behind the mound of earth. Among them was the family that I have mentioned. . . . I looked around, searching for the man who had shot them. It was an ss soldier, sitting on the edge at the narrow end of the pit, his legs dangling into it. He had a submachine gun across his knees and was smoking a cigarette. Completely naked, the people were made to go down . . . climbing over the heads of those already lying there to a spot indicated by the ss man. They lay down in front of the dead or injured people. Some of them caressed those who were still alive and spoke to them softly. Then I heard a round of rifle fire.⁴

The two ghettos in Kovel were established only on May 21, 1942. One of them housed some 8,000 working Jews and their families; the second accommodated the town's 6,000 remaining Jews and some others who had been brought there from neighboring townships. On June 2 people in the second ghetto were told that they were to be transferred "to the east," where they would be put to work. For three days searches were conducted in the ghetto and hundreds of people were shot in their hiding places. The Jews were packed onto a train, taken to limestone mines in the Kamen-Kashirskii area, and shot. The workers' ghetto was liquidated on August 19. Its inhabitants were taken to the same limestone mines. About 1,000 people were caught hiding or trying to escape and shot to death during the following weeks and months.⁵

In Rovno, where some 18,000 Jews had been murdered during the second half of 1941, about 5,000 remained in the ghetto. These were transported on July 13, 1942, by train to a forest near Kostopol and shot.⁶

The Kremenets ghetto, with more than 9,000 Jews, was liquidated in the course of two separate actions during the first half of August 1942. A German report on the first action, dated August 15, 1942, stressed that 6,402 Jews—2,322 men, 2,925

women, and 1,155 children—had received “special handling” (*Sonderbehandlung*). According to the August 20 report on the second killing action, “1,210 Jews [848 women and children and 362 men] had undergone ‘special treatment.’”⁷ The discrepancy between the 9,000 Jews in the ghetto and the 7,612 murdered Jews in the German reports stems from the large number of Jews who had hidden or escaped during the actions and were later caught and murdered.

In the early spring of 1942 the Lutsk ghetto still had a population of between 17,000 and 18,000 Jews. Several hundred men were sent to Vinnitsa on March 18, 1942, to work on building Hitler’s HQ, which was to be transferred there from east Prussia. With the exception of three who managed to escape to Transnistria, they were all murdered in the course of 1942. The largest massacre in Lutsk took place between August 20 and 23, when 15,000 to 16,000 Jewish people were taken out of the town and murdered. Searches for Jews hiding inside the ghetto or those who had managed to escape revealed about 2,000 people. These were executed on September 3, 1942. The labor camp in Lutsk was liquidated on December 12, 1942, and despite some acts of resistance during which some of the inmates managed to escape, the camp’s inhabitants were murdered.⁸

The town of Sarny had a prewar Jewish population numbering some 5,000. A ghetto was established in Sarny on April 2–4, 1942, and housed around 6,000 Jews, including people from neighboring townships. In August the ghetto Jews were moved to the town’s Poleska camp, to which Jews had already been brought from other places in northeast Volhynia. Altogether, between 14,000 and 15,000 Jews and a group of Gypsies were concentrated in camp Poleska. On August 27–28, 1942, the camp’s Jews were massacred. Members of the Jewish underground set fire to some huts and called the people to escape. Thousands took flight, and many were shot at the ghetto fences, in the city streets, and on their way to the forests. Several hundred Jews made it to the forests.⁹

On April 13, 1942, the Jews of Vladimir-Volynski (Ludmir) were forced into a ghetto to join several thousands who had been brought from neighboring townships. The ghetto’s total population stood at around 18,000. In May the ghetto was divided into two parts—one for the artisans and their families, the second for all the others. Hundreds of Jews from the ghetto were sent in August to dig giant pits near the village of Piatiden about 7 kilometers west of town. The Jews were told that an airport was being constructed on the site and that the pits would be used to hold tanks of aviation fuel. Suspecting that the pits were prepared for them, many of the Jews went into hiding. The massacre began on September 1 and continued for two weeks. By September 15, 1942, some 14,000 Jews had been murdered in Piatiden. Some of the artisans were left alive. Together with

those who had evaded death by hiding, around 4,000 Jews now remained in the ghetto. In his diary, Moshe Margalit described the murders:

Tuesday, September 1, 1942: Suddenly we see armed Ukrainian police, accompanied by Germans, approaching the gate. . . . A few seconds later I am in the shelter together with a dozen people, including a woman with a baby in her arms. . . . Shouts of policemen are heard. . . . In his mother's arms the baby begins to wail. . . . People advise the mother to suffocate her baby so as not to jeopardize us all. The mother tries, unsuccessfully, to silence her child with her hand. People want to remove him from her arms and choke him. . . . In the end, the mother decides to get out of the shelter. . . . But the house is already surrounded by police, wanting to discover the source of the baby's crying. The Nazis shoot into our shelter. . . . Four policemen enter the shelter. . . . On their hats is a yellow and white triangle, sign of the Ukrainian fascists. . . . A large mirror stands against the broken wall. I lay down behind it.

Tuesday, September 15, 1942: We see a group of Jews working in the ghetto. From them we learn that the pogrom is over. . . . I go home to see if any of my family has survived. . . . I climb into the attic and call: "Father! Mother! Come out, the pogrom is over. It's me!" Only the echo of my words bounces back at me. I burst into tears. Of the entire courtyard, no one has remained alive.¹⁰

Another massacre took place on November 13, 1942, claiming the lives of between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews. About 500 artisans remained in the ghetto. Of the several hundred Jews who escaped, most were caught and either handed over to the police or murdered by local Ukrainian peasants.¹¹

In defiance of orders issued on August 31, 1942, by Heinrich Schöne, Generalkommissar of Volhynia-Podolia, the Gebietskommissar in Vladimir-Volynski permitted a small ghetto inhabited by Jewish artisans to remain. In the entire Generalbezirk this was the only place in which a ghetto still existed, and its inhabitants were not employed in the war economy but served the personal needs of the local authorities, which also included ss staff.¹² This is proof that, notwithstanding orders, at its lowest ranks, the German administration—the Gebietskommissars—had the power, if only temporarily, to save the lives of small groups of Jews. The remaining Jews in Vladimir-Volynski were murdered on December 13, 1943.

In the spring of 1942, the town of Kobrin in Polesie still had a Jewish population numbering some 8,000. On July 27, about 3,000 Jews were taken to Bronnaya-Gora, northeast of Kobrin, where they were murdered. On October 14, 1942, the remaining Jews in Kobrin and nearby labor camps were taken to pits dug about 4 kilometers south of the town, on the way to Divin, and shot. The Jews resisted

this action by opening fire on the Germans and local police and setting fire to houses; about 500 managed to escape. Most were later caught and shot. Several dozen artisans left in Kobrin were all shot in December 1942.¹³

In the spring of 1942, the two ghettos in Brest-Litovsk housed between 18,000 and 20,000 Jews. On June 22, 1942, 900 Jews were sent eastwards from Brest-Litovsk, where they were employed in construction work. Two months later, 12 of them returned; the remainder had perished. In early October 1942 large numbers of German, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian police forces congregated in the town. The ghetto was cordoned off on the night of October 15–16, and the massacre began at dawn. The Jews were taken by train to Bronnaya-Gora, where they were murdered. For an entire month, searches were conducted in the ghetto for Jews in hiding, and 4,000 were caught and brought to a pit in the middle of the ghetto, where they were shot and then buried. When the siege on the empty ghetto ended in mid-November, local townspeople came in and looted whatever was left in the houses. Jews found hiding were handed over to the Germans.¹⁴ According to a woman who survived the massacre:

On October 15, 1942, . . . I had the idea to hide in the attic of our house and there, in a closed-off corner, sixteen of us sat for five weeks. . . . We witnessed the events. . . . Day after day, 70 to 100 people were brought to a nearby yard, shot, and buried. . . . Once we heard a small child shouting, “Mother, let them shoot us already. I’m cold.” It was in November, and people were forced to undress completely. The mothers undressed their children, then they undressed themselves. We were in 126 Kuibyshev Street. About 5,000 people are buried behind our fence. . . . The action took the form of a great celebration. All night long following the action, there were sounds of music and singing.¹⁵

No Jews remained in Brest-Litovsk after the October–November 1942 murder action.

The ghetto in Pinsk, which had been established on May 1, 1942, and housed between 12,000 to 15,000 Jews, including several thousand from nearby townships, was the last of the large ghettos in Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia to be liquidated. On October 22, 1942, rumors spread in the ghetto that local inhabitants had been employed in digging pits in the vicinity of the village of Dobrovolya. The news caused great anxiety among the ghetto’s Jews, and the Gebietskommissar’s office informed the Jewish council that the pits were being dug in order to provide storage for aviation fuel for the airport. As preparations were being made for the massacre in Pinsk, Himmler wired an order on October 27, 1942, to Gruppenführer Hans Prutzmann, Higher ss and Police Leader in the Ukraine:

The Wehrmacht HQ has informed me that the Brest [Litovsk]-Gomel road is suffering increasingly from attacks by gangs, making it hard to transport supplies to the troops. Based on reports in my possession, the Pinsk ghetto must be seen as a central basis for all activity on the part of [these] gangs in the region of the Pripet Marshes. I order you, therefore, to destroy the ghetto, notwithstanding any economic considerations.¹⁶

Even without Himmler's order, the Pinsk ghetto had been doomed to destruction, as part of the plan to eradicate the ghettos of Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia. In the early hours of October 29, 1942, the ghetto was surrounded by police forces. Hundreds of Jewish youngsters tried to burst through the fences. Many were killed. At first light, German forces entered the ghetto and began catching people and transferring them to the murder site at Dobrovolya. Hundreds of Jews were murdered inside the ghetto and in their hiding places. The Germans used dogs to sniff out Jews in hiding. The action went on for four days until November 1, 1942, when the entire ghetto population had been murdered. During the action, about 150 Jewish artisans, including several physicians, had been picked out and concentrated in a hospital building close to the ghetto. When the action was over, a small ghetto was established for them in the town's Karlin quarter; it, too, was liquidated on December 23, 1942.¹⁷ In his report on the destruction of the ghetto, Lieutenant Helmut Zaur, commander of Company 10 in the Police battalion 310, wrote:

It was decided at a meeting on October 28, 1942, in the Pinsk office of regiment commander Emil Kursk, that two battalions of the Orpo Regiment 15 and a cavalry company were to take care of the external closure. At the same time, company 10 and one platoon of company 11, belonging to Orpo Regiment 15, were to carry out searches inside the ghetto. Company 11, minus one platoon, had undertaken the task of securing the concentration point, securing some of the transports to the murder site, which is located 4 kilometers out of Pinsk, and encircling the execution site. Later, a cavalry force was engaged in this last task. This proved its efficiency in an extraordinary way with regard to the attempted escape of about 150 Jews, who were all caught, even though some of them managed to get several kilometers away. The ghetto was to be cordoned off at 04:30. Thanks to a preliminary reconnaissance of the ghetto made by commanders and the fact that secrecy was maintained, the ghetto was cordoned off quickly and the escape of Jews was rendered impossible. The beginning of the searches was determined for 06:00. . . . On the first day, some 10,000 people were executed. . . . The ghetto was searched a second time on October 30, 1942, and a third time on October 31. On November 1,

it was searched a fourth time. A total of some 15,000 Jews were brought to the concentration point. About 1,200 Jewish invalids and children who had remained in their homes were executed in the yards inside the ghetto. At the concentration point . . . a Jew attacked one of the cavalry men, snatching his rifle. . . . He was executed on the spot. Conclusions:

1. The forces employed in patrolling the ghetto must be equipped with axes and other tools, since it has been proven that all the doors were locked. . . .
2. Even when no entrances to attics are visible, it must be assumed that there are people there. Attics must be examined thoroughly from inside.
3. Even when there are no cellars, large numbers of people are located in the small space under the floor. Such places must be broken into from outside, or dogs must be used . . . or hand grenades must be thrown in immediately—after which all the Jews come straight out.
4. A hard object must be used in searches around the houses, since large numbers of people are in hiding in well-camouflaged dugouts.
5. It is advised to use children, by promising them their lives, in order to uncover hiding places. This method has been proven effective.¹⁸

It is obvious from Zaur's report that the planning and execution of the murder action was blatantly military in character: reconnaissance by officers of the ghetto, encirclement under darkness in order to surprise the Jews, allocation of forces to carry out various tasks—encircling forces, combing forces, and forces to prevent the escape of Jews and subsequent pursuit. Military principles are obvious in the plan: secrecy, surprise, and swiftness of operation. Even the part about the lessons to be learned from the action has a blatantly military hue. It can be assumed that this method of carrying out ghetto actions was quite common during that period.

The measures taken by thousands of Jews aware of what was awaiting them—preparing hiding places and not reporting for deportation—hindered the operation and caused it to last longer than the 1941 massacres. Also, many Jews were killed inside the ghettos and while attempting to escape.

Jews still occupied ghettos in the Kamenets-Podolski district during the early spring of 1942: in the towns of Kamenets-Podolski, Proskurov, Staro-konstantinov, Shepetovka, Dunaevtsy, Polonnoe, and other smaller towns and townships. Between May 1942 and January 1943 these ghettos were liquidated. The first ghetto in the district to be liquidated was that in Dunaevtsy, northeast of Kamenets-Podolski, where the Jewish population had numbered some 5,000. Around 2,300 men, women, and children were removed from the ghetto in April

1942 and forced into a phosphates mine. The entrance to the mine was blown up, and the people inside were buried alive. Thus according to a Soviet committee of inquiry that examined the mine:

The phosphates mine is located on the left side of the Studnitsa river . . . 126 meters from the Dunaevtsy-Stara Ushitsa road. The entrance to the mine had been blocked with earth and large stones. In clearing away the entrance, we discovered human skeletons. In the mine, corpses were found pressed close to each other, in various positions. . . . The entire mine, as far as could be seen, was full of corpses.¹⁹

This method of exterminating Jews inside a sealed mine was the easiest one for the Germans. It did not require large numbers of security forces, nor was it necessary to engage firing squads. According to the report, a further 5,000 Jews from Dunaevtsy and its vicinity were shot during the spring and autumn of 1942 near the Soloninchik forest.²⁰

The action in which the Jews of Starokonstantinov were annihilated took place on May 20, 1942. The Jews were forced to run along boards placed over a pit and were shot as they ran. The dead and wounded fell into the pit, and in the evening the Schutzmannen covered it over with earth. People were still alive inside. Several thousand were brought into the now-emptied Starokonstantinov ghetto from Gritsev, Ostropol, Siniavy, and Krasilov. On January 9, 1943, the Jews were taken to an antitank trench near the town, where they were shot. Days afterwards, Jews were found hiding, and they were shot on the spot.²¹

The ghetto in Shepetovka was established in January 1942, and Jews were brought to it from the region. The harsh conditions and terrible overcrowding in the ghetto, whose population reached 6,000, caused epidemics and a high death toll. The ghetto was liquidated and all its inhabitants were murdered on September 10, 1942.²² Some 5,000 Jews from the town and the surrounding region remained in the Kamenets-Podolski ghetto after the late August 1941 massacre. The ghetto with the remaining Jews was liquidated on November 1942. This action was carried out by the Sipo and the German Gendarmerie, although the main force consisted of two Ukrainian Schutzmannen companies, numbering 200–250 men. At his interrogation, Major Feodor Zaloga, commander of the Schutzmannen Company 2, testified:

I participated in this execution along with my subordinates in the second ring of the cordon. At this time the ghetto contained about 4,800 Jews. . . . As soon as the cordon had been set up, three trucks drove up with Jews from the ghetto. . . . They were directed to the execution site, where they had to undress. That's the way it continued for the whole length of the execution, approximately until

17:00–18:00. . . . I learned from conversations that during the night before the day of execution about 500 people ran away from the ghetto. Later more than 200 people were found in the buildings. . . . The valuables went to the SD and the new clothes to the participants in the execution. This time about 4,000 were annihilated.²³

A ghetto was established for artisans in Proskurov (Khmelnitski) and stayed intact until late 1942 or early 1943, when the last of its Jews were taken to be shot alongside a ravine near the village of Leznevo, on the way to Vinnitsa. Ukrainian policemen from the township of Volochisk who participated in massacres in Proskurov testified at their trials that the number of victims reached 6,000.²⁴

Parallel with the liquidation of the larger ghettos during 1942 and early 1943, dozens of ghettos were liquidated in the smaller towns and townships of Generalbezirk Volhynia-Podolia. Murder sites were fixed at locations near the towns in which the ghettos had been established, and in some cases Jews were brought from several ghettos to be murdered at one site. Firing squads constituted the usual method for killing Jews, although other methods were also employed. The township of Satanov, southwest of Proskurov, had a prewar Jewish population of over 1,500. After liberation, a 10 by 8 meter cellar was discovered in the town center south of the market square that contained corpses. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry:

On the night of May 14–15, 1942, . . . the Germans rounded up 240 people, regardless of age or gender. They were taken to a cellar whose entrance was sealed off with a brick wall. For a long time the agonizing groans and death cries of the people buried alive could be heard in the streets. On June 19, 1944, the cellar was dug open and the tortured people were revealed.²⁵

GENERALBEZIRK ZHITOMIR, KIEV,
NIKOLAEV, AND DNEPROPETROVSK

By the end of 1941 most of the Jews in the German-occupied regions of Generalbezirk Zhitomir and Kiev had been murdered. Those few who remained in ghettos were exterminated in 1942. After the first wave of massacres, no Jews remained in Generalbezirk Nikolaev and Dnepropetrovsk with the exception of a few dozen artisans in some of the towns. By spring 1942, about 10,000 Jews still lived in Generalbezirk Zhitomir scattered among the ghettos of Vinnitsa, Illintsy, Berdichev, and Khmelnik and several smaller ghettos.

About 5,000 Jews lived in the Vinnitsa ghetto in early spring 1942. Some of them were employed, alongside non-Jewish locals, in building the Wehrmacht's

GHQ—known as Werewolf—in the vicinity of the town. On April 16, 1942, prior to the transfer of Hitler's HQ to Vinnitsa, the Jews were ordered to report at 8 a.m. to the stadium in the culture park and to bring with them enough food and clothing for two days. After selection, about 1,000 artisans were separated from the others. Half remained in a labor camp in Vinnitsa, and the others were sent to a camp in Zhitomir. The remaining 4,000 Jews were shot the same day in Vinnitsa. A few dozen managed to escape. The remaining artisans were murdered during the spring of 1943.²⁶

In Berdichev, some 500 Jewish artisans and their families were held in a ghetto in Lisaia-Gora. The ghetto was liquidated on June 15, 1942, and the majority of its inhabitants were murdered. Sixty artisans remained in the town, including tailors and electricians. As the Soviet army approached the town in October 1943, these remaining Jews were murdered.²⁷ The ghetto in Illintsy housed some 2,000 Jews. About 1,200 of them were murdered on May 15, 1942, and the remainder on May 27–28 and on December 23, 1942.²⁸

In Khmelnik, about 1,700 Jewish artisans and their families were left alive by the Germans after the January 1942 massacre. They were joined by a few hundred Jews escaping extermination from neighboring towns and townships. A massacre of children took place in Khmelnik on June 12, 1942. According to an eyewitness:

The policemen started to snatch small children from their mothers' arms . . . 363 children under the age of 16 were taken. My brother and I were among them. . . . Apart from two Germans, all the others were local policemen. I managed to escape when the children were being taken out of the yard. . . . The children were taken to the forest and shot.²⁹

Many mothers refused to relinquish their children and were taken with them to be exterminated. About 1,300 Jews in Khmelnik were murdered on March 3, 1943. Out of the 135 Jews remaining in a small labor camp, 50 were shot on May 26, 1943, and 85 managed to escape.³⁰

Following the first wave of massacres, several thousand Jews remained in Generalbezirk Kiev, in the ghettos of Zvenigorodka, Piriatin, and Priluki. In May 1942 300 Jewish youngsters were taken from Zvenigorodka and sent to a labor camp in the village of Nemorozhi.³¹ The last 1,300 Jews in Zvenigorodka were murdered in mid-May. The Jews in the Nemorozhi camp, apparently the last of the labor camps in Generalbezirk Kiev, were murdered in August 1943, but some of the prisoners had managed to escape and survive.³² The ghetto in Piriatin was liquidated in May 1942, and its 1,600 inhabitants were murdered.³³ On May 20 1,290 Jews were shot in Priluki.³⁴ The police forces involved in these

actions were local Ukrainian police and some Sipo soldiers. Tsfirkun, a local policeman who participated in a March 1942 massacre in the Kamenka township, south of Cherkassy, testified:

The following policemen took part in the killing: myself, Orlik, S. Revyakov, and others. . . . In the evening, the policemen transferred over 100 Jews from the ghetto . . . and placed them in a stable. Gebietskommissar Lange convened the policemen. . . . He explained to us what our missions were and gave us each a glass of vodka. . . . Shortly afterwards we started moving the Jews in groups of eight to ten from the stable. They were pushed into the cellar. . . . I went down to the cellar and saw about 50 or 60 corpses lying there. . . . I drank a glass of vodka—the bottle stood there—I picked up a rifle from the corner and joined the line of policemen and started shooting at the groups of Jews. . . . I shot from a distance of 4 or 5 meters. After the executions, the policemen Orlik, Revyakov, and others were ordered to dispose of the bodies. Later, they told me how they had used their bayonets to remove the victims' gold teeth and filled their pockets.³⁵

Similar methods were used to murder Jews throughout the region. By late 1942 and early 1943, no ghettos remained in Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Here and there, small groups of Jewish artisans were kept alive in order to serve the local civilian administrations. The last of these Jews were murdered in 1943, on the eve of the German withdrawal from the region.

20

Mass Murder in District Galicia Operation Reinhard

OPERATION REINHARD AND THE EXTERMINATION CAMP AT BELZEC

“Operation Reinhard” was the code name given to the extermination of Jews in the General Government of Poland. From spring 1942 until the end of that year, most of the Jewish inhabitants of District Galicia were murdered. Out of the 600,000 Jews at the onset of German occupation, an estimated 507,000 to 522,000 still lived in District Galicia in March 1942.¹

Preparations for Operation Reinhard began on November 1, 1941, with construction of an extermination camp at Belzec, on the railway between Lublin and Lvov. Construction was completed in mid-March 1942, and the deportation of Jews from District Galicia commenced. Its commander was Hauptsturmführer Christian Wirth, who had taken part in Operation Euthanasia.² The extermination camps Sobibor and Treblinka were subsequently built as part of Operation Reinhard.

The Belzec extermination camp was oblong in shape, with each of its sides measuring roughly 270 meters. The entire camp was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence and camouflaged by greenery. The camp staff consisted of 25 to 30 German ss personnel, former members of the euthanasia program, and 60 to 80 “Travniki” Ukrainians.³ In the camps, the ss men served in command and administrative posts, while the Ukrainians manned the watch towers and did guard duty. Jewish prisoners, chosen from the transports, were employed in various forms of physical labor, such as removing corpses from the gas chambers and burying them, as well as dealing with the victims’ property and processing it for dispatch from the camp. Thus a permanent workforce of about 700 Jews evolved in the camp, and these were divided into work details. Since most of them were executed for the slightest misdemeanor and others died because of the hard work and harsh conditions, only a handful managed to survive for more than a couple

of months. But they were constantly being replaced by others, chosen from the newly arrived Jews on the never-ending transports.⁴

The system for exterminating Jews that Wirth devised in Belzec was based on two principles: misleading the victims and carrying out the murders quickly. The victims were misled into believing that they had arrived in a transit camp, from which they would be sent to a labor camp; they were told to take a shower and sterilize their clothes. The Jews were supposed to believe in this up until the very moment that they were closed in the gas chambers, which were disguised to look like bona fide shower stalls.

The exterminations commenced on March 17, 1942, and continued until early June, when activity came to a temporary standstill. This hiatus was due to the decision to build larger gas chambers in which it would be possible to murder between 1,500 and 2,000 Jews simultaneously. Work on the six new chambers was completed during the second week of July, and the gassings were resumed. They continued without a break until December 1942.⁵

At the peak of its activity, the camp received transports of 40–60 railway freight cars, into each of which 100 or more people were forced, with their luggage, with no air, no water, and without any sanitary facilities. Under these conditions, the Jews were obliged to spend hours, and sometimes days, in transit or waiting in railway stations—because military transport was given preference. Many of them died in the trains on the way. In his testimony, Untersturmführer Karl Alfred Shluch, who served in Belzec, described the trains' arrival at the camp:

Detraining from the freight cars was carried out by a group of Jewish prisoners. . . . Two or three of the Germans from the camp staff supervised this action. . . . During the detraining, the Jews were told that they were in transit and that they should go for baths and disinfection. This announcement was made by Wirth and translated by a Jewish kapo. Afterwards the Jews were taken to the undressing barracks. . . . After leaving the undressing barracks I had to show the Jews the way to the gas chambers. . . . After the Jews entered the gas chambers, the doors were closed. . . . Then ss Scharführer Lorenz Hackenholdt switched on the engine which supplied the gas. . . . Someone looked through the small window into the gas chamber to verify that everyone inside was dead. Only then were the outside doors opened and the gas chambers ventilated. . . . After the ventilation, a Jewish working group entered and removed the bodies.⁶

DEPORTATION TO BELZEC: FIRST WAVE

The first wave of Operation Reinhard deportations from District Galicia to Belzec began on March 20, 1942, and continued until mid-April, during which time over 35,000 Jews were murdered. Transports arrived from Lvov, Stanislaw, Kolomyia, and other towns and cities. Most of the Jews who arrived in Belzec during this wave of deportations were classified by the Germans as “unfit for work.”

Preparations for the deportation of the Jews of Lvov had already begun in mid-February 1942, when the German authorities informed the Jewish council chairman, Dr. H. Landsberg, of their intention to transfer some of the city’s Jews elsewhere, because the overcrowding in the city hindered supplies. In order to ease the burden of having to provide welfare services, the authorities planned to transfer the welfare cases away from the city. These people would be sent to the Ukraine to work in agriculture and to dry swamps in Polesie. The Jewish council was ordered by the Sipo to prepare the lists of some 30,000 Jews, and the Jewish police had to concentrate them and hand them over. Thus, according to Rabbi Kahane:

The action began two weeks before Passover. . . . They kidnapped anyone who didn’t have a work permit. Night after night the Sobieski school was filled with miserable people, and when it was packed tight, the Gestapo moved the people to the railway station, loaded them on trucks, and the trains set off. Where to? For the time being, no one knows. The action has been going on for a week now, but the work of the Jewish police has not been good enough for the Gestapo.⁷

When it became apparent to the Germans that the Jewish police were not filling the required quota of Jews, they summoned the two Jewish council members responsible for the roundup and the commander of the Jewish police and informed them that 100,000 Jews would be banished from the city if the quota were not filled and that any Jewish policeman who tried to avoid bringing in Jews for deportation would be made to join the transport, together with his family. The threat was only partially successful, and toward the end of March the Germans took on the job of managing the concentration of the people themselves.⁸

Some 15,000 Jews were deported from Lvov to Belzec between March 19 and April 1, 1942. Neither the Jewish council nor the Jewish police knew what was happening in Belzec, since the organized mass extermination was still in its early days and the facts were slow to filter through.

In Stanislaw, after the deportation of thousands of young people to labor camps,

after executions, starvation, and disease which took a heavy toll, between 20,000 and 23,000 Jews were still living there in March. On the eve of Passover (March 31), the German and Ukrainian police forces and a unit of Police battalion 133 surrounded the ghetto and ordered the Jews to assemble in one of the squares. Many of the Jews went into hiding, and many others tried to escape, but the police fired on them, threw hand grenades into hiding places, and set several houses on fire in order to force people out onto the street. In the square, the Germans checked work permits, and their owners were released with their families. About 5,000 people, including the remaining Jews deported from Hungary and the inhabitants of an old age home and an orphanage, were sent to Belzec. A few hundred Jews were murdered in the square.⁹

A ghetto was established on March 25 in Kolomyia and divided into three separate neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, which had formerly housed some 2,000 people, now had to accommodate 18,000 Jews. Between March 3 and 5, the Germans and Ukrainians passed from one neighborhood to another, removed some 5,000 people, most of whom were not suitable for work, and sent them to Belzec. Dozens were burned inside houses set alight by the Germans.¹⁰

In Drohobych, whose prewar Jewish population had exceeded 13,000, the Jewish council was ordered in late March to collect 2,000 Jews within two hours for “transfer from the town.” As in Lvov, here, too, the Jewish council genuinely believed that the people were being transferred and agreed to carry out the order. But the roundup was not achieved with suitable speed, and German and Ukrainian police forces went into action to collect thousands of people. After a selection, in which mainly workers in the local petrol industry (and their families) were allowed to remain, some 2,000 people were sent to Belzec.¹¹

The Jewish council in Ternopol was ordered to prepare a list of the old, the handicapped, welfare cases, and orphans—in other words, all “the unproductive elements,” according to the Germans, in order to, as they said, “transfer them to other places and make things easier in the ghetto.” Acting on German orders, the Jewish police rounded up people and brought them all to the old synagogue. Between 600 and 700 Jews were taken by the German and Ukrainian police to a forest outside of town and shot.¹²

The first wave of deportations from District Galicia came to an end in mid-April 1942. Apart from the 35,000 Jews murdered in Belzec during this period, hundreds more perished in hiding or trying to escape. Between 472,000 and 487,000 Jews remained in District Galicia after this wave of deportations.

SECOND WAVE OF DEPORTATIONS:
“THE BIG DEPORTATION”

In order to facilitate the deportation of Jews to the death camps, Governor General Hans Frank issued a directive on June 3, 1942, in which he handed over all authority for Jewish affairs in the General Government to the ss.¹³ Himmler visited Auschwitz and the Operation Reinhard headquarters in Lublin in mid-July 1942. Following the visit, he issued an order to Obergruppenführer Friedrich Krieger, the Higher ss and Police Leader in the General Government, stating, “I herewith order the resettlement of the entire Jewish population from the General Government to be carried out and completed by December 31, 1942. From December 31, 1942, no person of Jewish origin may remain within the General Government, unless they are in the collection camps in Warsaw, Kracow, Czestochowa, Radom, and Lublin.”¹⁴ In other words, the Jews of the General Government, including those of District Galicia, had to be annihilated by the end of 1942, except those in collection camps.¹⁵

With construction of the new gas chambers still under way in Belzec, an ss unit, accompanied by the Ukrainian police, entered the Lvov ghetto on June 26, 1942, and rounded up between 6,000 and 8,000 Jews. These were taken to the sands near Janowska camp, where they were shot. This massacre was preceded by the invalidation of all local work permits, and employers were required to provide the Jewish Section of the German Labor Exchange with a list of all Jews employed by them. All unemployed Jews were obliged to register with the Jewish council. All Jews included in the lists provided by their employers or who had registered with the Jewish council were issued individually numbered “registration certificates,” on which their immediate family (spouse and children) were named. The June 26, 1942, massacre involved all those Jews who had no registration certificates. These were mainly the elderly, women and children, and orphans with no head-of-family in employment.¹⁶

In late June 1942, once construction of the larger gas chambers was completed in Belzec, the Germans embarked upon the “big deportation,” and most of the Jews of District Galicia were exterminated. Deportations to Belzec continued for almost five months, until early December, when the murder operation in the camp ceased. The first step adopted by the Sipo in carrying out the deportations was to disenfranchise the German Labor Exchange from issuing Scheinen. According to the report written by Friedrich Katzmann, ss and Police Leader in District Galicia:

Unfortunately, we are obliged to admit to the very troublesome fact that the Germans operating here . . . conducted with the Jews the worst kind of shady

dealing. . . . Because the civil administration was too weak to control this chaos, the ss and Police Leader had undertaken the task of mobilizing Jews to the workforce. . . . All work permits belonging to the companies or the [local] authorities have been annulled, and permits issued by the Labor Exchange have been reissued and stamped by the police.¹⁷

The next wave of deportations, which began in the summer of 1942, also included physically fit people capable of joining the workforce. The first transport to Belzec came from the town of Przemyśl. The town's 22,000 Jews had been forced into a ghetto in mid-July, together with some 5,000 Jews from neighboring townships. Several days after the establishment of the ghetto, the Jewish council was instructed to collect all work permits in the possession of the Jews in order to have them stamped by the Sipo. Only 5,000 stamped permits were returned on July 26, 1942, leaving the majority of the ghetto's Jews without work permits. On July 27, the ghetto was surrounded and a roundup began which culminated on August 3 with the deportation of 13,000 Jews to Belzec. Among those listed for deportations were army employees whose work permits had not been stamped by the Sipo. Jewish council chairman Ignatsyi Duldig appealed on behalf of these people to the town's military commander, Major Max Liedtke, and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Dr. Alfred Battel, and requested their intervention. The two contacted the Sipo, and, when their request went unanswered, the army prevented the departure of the train with the deportees. Following negotiations involving the top military echelons in Krakow, some of the Jews in question were removed from the transport. Duldig and another member of the Jewish council had been arrested and executed by the Sipo for having dared to appeal to the army.¹⁸ This apparently was the only incident of the German army intervening and forcibly preventing the Sipo from deporting Jews in its employ.

In this wave of deportations, the one involving the largest number of people took place in Lvov. Under the command of Katzmann, the roundup began on August 10, 1942, when people were removed from their homes and taken to a point of concentration and from there to camp Janowska. After selection, the Jews were boarded on trains and transported to Belzec. Many Jews went into hiding, and many others were caught and murdered immediately. The Jewish council played no role in this deportation, and the Germans made direct use of the Jewish police, who helped them and the Ukrainians to transfer the ghetto Jews to the concentration points. In many cases, the ghetto police saved the lives of fellow Jews. The roundup continued for two weeks and ended on August 23, 1942. According to Zaderecki:

They surrounded house after house. . . . The sick were shot in their beds. . . . People jumped from the top stories in order to hasten their deaths and avoid being tortured. . . . Jews were forced out of rooftop hiding places with poles and fell to their deaths to become a stain of blood on the sidewalk. . . . On August 12 notices signed by General Katzmann were posted in the town, threatening death to anyone caught harboring Jews or extending any kind of assistance to them. This warning also said that anyone knowing the whereabouts of Jews had to inform the police and would be punished for refraining to do so . . . and an incentive was promised. As a prize Jewish property would fall into the hands of anyone informing on them. The bait worked, and betrayals flowed in. The Jews were given away by the rabble as well as by the so-called educated classes, whether for material gain or out of fear. From among the intelligentsia there came few informants. These made do with refusing to continue harboring Jews and turning them out of their homes, but there were also those who chose to ignore the Germans' threats. . . . Jews found hiding were shot on the spot. . . . Every transport to arrive at Janovska [camp] underwent a selection. Young, physically fit men were sent to the labor camps. . . . The others were made to undress and loaded on railway trucks, destined for the crematoria at Belzec. They were loaded naked in order to prevent attempted escapes.¹⁹

The many suicides mentioned by Zaderecki are also described by Kahane: "In order to avoid falling into the hands of the murderers, entire families committed suicide. People relinquished their property in exchange for cyanide pills."²⁰ Between 50,000 and 60,000 Jews were sent from Lvov to Belzec in the course of this large deportation. A similar number of Jews remained in Lvov.²¹

Accompanied by Ukrainian police, the Sipo arrived in the Lvov ghetto in early September, where they arrested a group of Jewish council officials and eleven members of the Jewish Police. The Jewish council chairman, Dr. Henrik Landsberg, who had been arrested several days previously, was brought in, and they were all hung from the balcony of the Jewish council building. The reason for these murders was not entirely clear. One rumor had it that they were executed in retaliation for the murder of a German by a Jew; another version saw the murders as a kind of closure of the big August massacre and a desire to convene a new Jewish council, whose members would be more obedient to the German administration. The new chairman of the Jewish council was Eduard Aberson.²²

At the end of the August 1942 action, the German authorities announced that those Jews in Lvov who still lived outside the ghetto would be moved into the ghetto; the final date for their transfer was set for September 7. Overcrowding, hunger, and sickness resulted in a very high rate of mortality among the Lvov

ghetto inhabitants. In late September, between 5000 and 7,500 Jews who had no employment classification were removed from the ghetto; some were sent to Janovska camp and others to Belzec.

On November 18 a census was conducted in the ghetto, in the course of which the ghetto workers were categorized in accordance with their importance to the German war economy. About 12,000 workers employed in factories producing goods for the military were marked with the letter *W* (*Wehrmacht*) or *R* (*Rüstungsindustrie*, armaments industry). In early January 1943 some 10,000 unemployed Jews were removed from the ghetto, taken out of town to a place known as Piaski (sands), and shot. When the murder operations ceased in camp Belzec in late 1942, Piaski became the main site in which the Jews of Lvov were murdered. Most of the Lvov Jewish council members were executed on January 30, 1943, including its new chairman, Aberson. The ghetto was then converted into a labor camp and given the name Julag (or Judenlager, Jews' camp). It was headed by a "chief Jew" (*Oberjude*), whose job it was to liaise between the Jewish inmates and the German camp authorities.²³ An estimated 25,000 Jews remained in the Julag in late January 1943—about half the number of those remaining after the August 1942 action.

During the latter half of 1942 and early 1943, as these massacres were being conducted in Lvov, Jews in other areas of Galicia were being subjected to similar treatment. Throughout that time, Jews were either being brought from smaller ghettos to larger ones or were being deported to Belzec. After mid-December 1942, when activity had ceased at Belzec, executions of Jews continued on the outskirts of towns and townships.

Between 14,000 and 17,000 Jews still lived in the Stanislav ghetto in July 1942, the month in which the town's Jewish council chairman, several council members, and hundreds of other Jews were shot in a nearby forest. In late July and early August, following accusations that Jews had beaten a Ukrainian policeman, 1,000 Jews were murdered and buried in a pit in the town center. The Germans hanged the new Jewish council chairman, Mordechai Goldstein, and twenty Jewish policemen, probably as punishment for the Jewish council not having carried out an order to round up 1,000 Jews. On September 12, 5,000 Jews were deported to Belzec. The ghetto was then reduced in area, and in December it accommodated some 4,000 Jews. However, the numbers continued to fall as a result of daily roundups. Between January 24 and 26, about 1,000 Jews were removed from the ghetto and shot and 1,500 to 2,000 were sent to the Janovska camp in Lvov. On February 22 or 23 the last of the Jews were executed and the ghetto was liquidated. A small number of Jews remained in the town's labor camp.²⁴

Between 11,000 and 12,000 Jews lived in the Ternopol ghetto in July 1942,

including those brought in from nearby townships. The ghetto was surrounded on August 28 by German police forces, and people were removed from their homes. Work permit holders and their families were released. Able-bodied young men were sent to labor camps; 3,000 people, mainly women, children, and the elderly, were loaded onto trains, joining Jews from other parts of the region, and were sent to Belzec on August 31, 1942. During the latter half of September, the Sipo ordered the Jewish council to prepare a list of the ghetto's residents over 60. The council and the Jewish police were then ordered on September 30 to hand over 1,000 elderly Jews. Since most of the people on the list were already in hiding, German and Ukrainian police entered the ghetto, where they managed to pull out 600 to 700 people and send them to Belzec. A total of 2,400 Jews were deported in two separate transports to Belzec during November 1942. Many of the deportees jumped off the trains.²⁵ Jeannette Margolis described their escape:

We were 80 women in the carriage. The windows were high up and barred with barbed wire. It turned out that someone had managed to smuggle in a file in order to cut the barbed wire. Several women stood on the shoulders of others and cut the wire. The train galloped on. The women who were to jump had to stand on the shoulders of others, to get their legs out and to jump in the direction the train was going. . . . I was afraid to jump. . . . All right, I thought, I'll jump, I'll go home, what then? Again I'll be taken to a deportation and again I'll have to go through all that suffering? But when I saw that out of the 80 only a few women remained in the carriage, I imagined the shouting and the beatings we would get. I decided to jump. . . . There was a shot and a bullet grazed my head. . . . I was saved, but I was wounded. . . . Most of the women who had jumped had been killed. . . . Those who had managed to survive [the jump] had been captured. Of all the women to jump train from Ternopol, it seems to me that I was the only one who remained alive.²⁶

In late 1942 and early 1943, when its Jewish population still numbered between 6,000 and 7,000, a part of the Ternopol ghetto was sectioned off to form a labor camp. Between 2,500 and 3,000 Jews considered "of value" to the German economy were concentrated in the labor camp.²⁷

During a nine-day action in Drohobych—between August 8 and 17, 1942—600 Jews were murdered and 2,500 were sent to Belzec. A ghetto was established in the town in late September, and 5,800 Jews were sent to Belzec in October and November, while about 1,200 Jews were murdered in the town itself. Toward the end of 1942 about 5,000 Jews remained in the ghetto. All the Jews employed by various factories, especially the petrol industries, were removed from the ghetto and transferred to nearby labor camps. In mid-February 1943, about 450 people

were taken from the ghetto to a forest near the town and shot. The only remaining Jews by spring 1943 were those in employment and living in the ghetto and the labor camps. A few Jews had managed to survive in hiding, had found refuge on the Aryan side, or had escaped to the forests.²⁸

The story of the Jews of the Buczacz township was typical of the smaller Jewish towns and townships of eastern District Galicia during the second half of 1942 and early 1943. On the eve of war, Buczacz had a Jewish population between 4,500 and 5,000. About 350 of the township's intelligentsia were murdered during the first days of German occupation, and hundreds of young people were sent to labor camps. The Jewish population of Buczacz swelled to over 5,000 with the addition of refugees from other townships and villages. In common with most of the townships, Buczacz had no enterprises of value to the German war economy. The first massacre of Buczacz Jews took place on October 17, 1942, with the deportation of 1,400 to Belzec; a further 200 were shot trying to escape. On November 27, 1942, another transport of 2,500 Jews was sent from Buczacz to Belzec. Many of these had been found hiding, and others were captured while trying to escape to the nearby forests. Local non-Jewish inhabitants took part in the hunt for escapees, and the bodies of some 250 Jews were subsequently found in the township and nearby. The few remaining Jews were forced into a ghetto only in late 1942 and were joined by several thousand Jews from neighboring townships. On February 1–2, 1943, more than 2,000 Jews were removed from the ghetto and shot outside the township. Jewish artisans were removed from the ghetto and transferred to a suburban labor camp.²⁹

The number of victims in the murder actions in District Galicia was actually greater than given, because no data exist regarding the hundreds who were murdered between each of them, whether in groups or individually. The same applies to the thousands of Jews who died of starvation and disease in the ghettos.

Operation Reinhard met with certain reservation by the military command in the General Government. On September 18, 1942, as the murders were at their peak, a memo was sent from Gen. Kurt von Gienanth, Wehrmacht commander in the General Government, to the HQ of the Wehrmacht, in which he pointed out (among other things) that:

The immediate removal of the Jews would cause a considerable reduction in Germany's war potential, as well as supplies to the front. . . . Unless work of military importance is to suffer, Jews cannot be released until replacements have been trained. . . . It is requested that the evacuation of the Jews employed in industrial enterprises be postponed until this has been done.³⁰

The army did not object in principle to the annihilation of Jews, only to the annihilation of Jews employed in enterprises that served the war effort. The army's

demand was also time-restricted—until such a time as suitable manpower could be trained from among the non-Jewish population. The army got its way, with some conditions. A letter dated October 23, 1942, from Friedrich Katzmann to the district's military commander details the arrangement between the army and the ss with regard to conditions under which still-useful Jews were to be held:

In principle, Jews will be held in camps under the jurisdiction of the ss and Police Leader in Galicia. Since these camps have not yet been erected, the enterprises employing Jews will accommodate them in camps for which they themselves will be responsible.³¹

The ss and Police Leader also stated that as of November 1, 1942, Jews would receive no payment for their labor, and enterprises employing Jews would pay directly to the ss and Police HQ in District Galicia. Thus the labor of thousands of Jews provided a direct source of income for the ss and Police.

For logistical reasons the ss authorities in the General Government were not prepared to erect concentration camps for the Jews. On November 10, 1942, an order was issued by Friedrich Krieger, Higher ss and Police Leader in the General Government, according to which all remaining Jews were to be closed in ghettos. This order, a copy of which was passed on to Katzmann, listed the thirty-two towns and townships in District Galicia in which ghettos were to be established.³² The order refers to closed ghettos supervised by the ss, similar to labor camps. The ghettos would be temporary and exist for as long as their inmates were needed in the workforce. Their inmates would then be murdered or imprisoned in concentration camps.³³

The only Jews remaining in District Galicia after the winter of 1942–43 were employed in enterprises serving the war economy or the local authorities. A few thousand “illegals” remained who had managed to hide and evade the transports. According to Katzmann's report, “By the time the Higher ss and Police Leader [Krieger] issued his November 10, 1942, order regarding the creation of Jewish neighborhoods . . . 254,989 Jews had been evacuated or moved elsewhere.”³⁴

In accordance with this report, 254,989 Jews had been sent to their deaths by November 10, 1942—the overwhelming majority to Belzec. A further 25,000 to 30,000 Jews from eastern Galicia were murdered in Belzec in the next month, when the mass exterminations ceased in the camp. Thousands more were shot between November 10 and February 1943. The number of Jews murdered during this period can be estimated at around 350,000, to which must be added the death toll from starvation, disease, or natural causes. The number of Jews remaining in District Galicia in February 1943 may be estimated at between 140,000 and 150,000.³⁵

Himmler's order on July 19, 1942, according to which the evacuation of Jews in the General Government would be completed by December 31, 1942, was not carried out in full in District Galicia, because some of them still lived in ghettos rather than in collection camps. This was the result of intervention on the part of the army's supply and armaments authorities who employed Jews—whether directly or via commercial agencies—in enterprises serving the war economy. For thousands of Jews it was only a temporary postponement. Their extermination was not cancelled; it was merely “put off” for a few months.

21

Annihilation in Areas under Military Administration

GERMAN ADVANCE TOWARD STALINGRAD AND THE CAUCASIAN MOUNTAINS

The attack on southern Russia and the advance toward Stalingrad and the Caucasian Mountains during the latter half of 1942 placed more regions under Germany's military control. Germany's summer campaign began on June 28 and came as a surprise to the Soviet army, whose defense lines collapsed because it was expecting an attack in the direction of Moscow. The Sixth Army, under the command of Gen. Fridrich von Paulus, led the attack on Stalingrad and Army Group A advanced toward the Caucasus. In July the German forces captured the towns of Voronezh, Voroshilovgrad (today Lugansk), and Rostov. The German army arrived at the outskirts of Stalingrad in early September and began its attack. In August the forces advancing toward the Caucasus took the Black Sea port towns of Novorossiisk, Stavropol, Piatigorsk, and Maikop and its oilfields as well as the town of Mozdok. The town of Nalchik in the northern foothills of the Caucasian Mountains was taken in late October 1942. The German advance was stopped in the vicinity of Grozny. It allowed the Soviet authorities no time to organize the evacuation of populations from the occupied territories. In the Caucasus, the local Muslim populations, especially those of the autonomous republics of Kabardino-Balkar and Chechnya, welcomed the advancing Germans, who granted them autonomy in cultural and religious affairs and gradually in local economy affairs.¹ At the end of a nine-month siege, the Germans captured the Crimean city of Sevastopol on July 3, 1942.

The battle for Stalingrad lasted until November. Although the Soviet army defended the city ferociously, most of it fell to the Germans. The Soviet army prepared a counterattack that began on November 19, 1942. A week later, the German Sixth Army was encircled. The German forces surrendered at Stalingrad on January 6, 1943, and over 90,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner; 150,000

soldiers fell in battle. As a result of the defeat in Stalingrad, Germany's Army Group A came under threat of being cut off, but its swift withdrawal from the northern Caucasus, Stavropol, and Krasnodar areas saved it from sharing the fate of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. The tide turned in favor of the Soviet army. Germany's victories had come to an end, and a series of defeats from 1943 to summer 1944 led to its eventual withdrawal from the occupied Soviet territories.

ANNIHILATION OF JEWS IN EASTERN BELORUSSIA AND CENTRAL RUSSIA

Following the first wave of massacres in these areas, the murder of the last remaining Jews began in the spring of 1942. Zhlobin, in the county of Gomel, had a prewar Jewish population of above 3,700; the remaining 3,000 under German occupation were murdered on April 12.² About 2,000 Jews inhabited the ghetto in the Sadki neighborhood of Smolensk; in July they were taken to a grove near the village of Magalanschina and shot.³ In late 1942 and early 1943 the last 300 Jews in the district of Smolensk, in the towns of Sychevka and Pochinok, were killed.⁴ In May and July 1942, the SS authorities deported about 1,500 Jews from Warsaw to Bobruisk and Smolensk to work there. Only 91 were sent back to Lublin in September 1943. All the others were murdered or died of hunger and brutal treatment.⁵ According to one testimony, the Sipo kept 40–80 Jewish workers alive in Smolensk to supply their own needs; these were murdered at a later date.⁶

The town of Voronezh had a prewar Jewish population of 8,500. The part of the town on the western bank of the river Voronezh fell to the Germans on July 6, 1942. In late July and early August, when the town had become part of the front line, the Germans ordered it to be evacuated. In the course of the evacuation some 450 people were identified as Jews and shot near the township of Khokholski, west of Voronezh.⁷ According to some sources, the number of Jews executed in Voronezh on August 10 and in other locations in the district of Voronezh during the German occupation there was 1,100.⁸

THE UKRAINE AND THE SOUTHERN REGIONS OF EUROPEAN RUSSIA

Much of the 50,000 strong prewar Jewish population in eastern Ukraine and the southern regions of European Russia captured by the Germans in the summer 1942 attack had not been evacuated.⁹ On the eve of the German invasion, 11,000 Jews lived in Voroshilovgrad (Lugansk). The town fell on July 17,

1942, and on November 1 its remaining 2,000 to 3,000 Jews were led to a nearby antitank trench—at a place known as Ostraia-Mogila and Ivanishchev—and murdered; some were killed in gas vans.¹⁰ About 1,000 Jewish males who survived the massacre of autumn/winter 1941 were still in Dnepropetrovsk during the early summer of 1942. They were murdered in August.¹¹

The Crimean city of Sevastopol had a prewar Jewish population of above 6,000, of whom at least one-third managed to escape before it was blockaded. Jews from other occupied territories also found refuge in the city, but no numerical data is available regarding them. On July 6, three days after the city fell to the Germans, the entire Jewish population was ordered to report to the Dynamo sports stadium for registration; from there they were taken to the municipal prison. On July 12, 1,200 to 1,500 Jews were loaded onto trucks, transported to Kilometer 4 on the Balaklavsk road, and shot. Another group was taken to the village of Stari-Sholi in the county of Balaklavsk and shot. Several groups were shot in the vicinity of Bakhtisarai. A total of 4,200 Jews were murdered in Sevastopol.¹²

Having occupied Rostov for a week in late November 1941 before being driven back by the Soviet army, the Germans recaptured it on July 24, 1942. This time the city was taken by surprise, and the local Soviet authorities had no time to evacuate the population. Some of the Jews who had escaped Rostov prior to the first occupation returned when it was liberated in the hope that it would not fall again.¹³ Of the town's almost 27,000 strong prewar Jewish population, between 16,000 and 18,000 remained under the second occupation. On August 1, 1942, the town's military commander, General Kittel, ordered all the Jews to register. According to a German report, only about 2,000 did so.¹⁴ On August 10 the German-appointed Jewish council chairman, Dr. Lurie, was ordered by Sonderkommando 10a to publish the following announcement to the Jewish inhabitants of Rostov: "In order to protect the . . . Jews against the irresponsible acts of enraged elements, the German command has to resettle the Jews outside the town and thus make easier their protection."¹⁵

All the Jews of Rostov, including Jewish spouses in mixed marriages, were ordered to present themselves at a specific location on Tuesday, August 11 at 8:00 a.m.; they were told to bring with them their personal documents, cash, valuables, and the keys to their apartments. They were then taken to be murdered some kilometers out of town in the Zmiev ravine. For a couple of days during which the murder was taking place, the region's few inhabitants were ordered out of their homes. The Jews were brought to the site on trucks and shot. The murders were carried out by Sonderkommando 10a, which included some former Soviet prisoners of war.¹⁶ Many people did not report on the designated date and, for months afterwards, Jews were being caught and put to death in gas vans.¹⁷

According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, "Preliminary findings show that the number of Jews murdered in Rostov between July 23, 1942, and February 13, 1943, was in the range of 15,000 to 18,000."¹⁸

Although the towns and villages southeast of Rostov (whose moderate climate drew many evacuees from besieged Leningrad and the Crimea) had had a scanty prewar Jewish population, these Jews were joined by thousands of Jewish refugees from German-occupied territories. Most of them were unable to escape or to be evacuated before the Germans took over; they stayed there and were murdered. Documents of the Soviet Twenty-eighth Army, which liberated the region in February 1943, and reports compiled by the military's political department provide information on the atrocities perpetrated by the Germans against the local population, including the Jews. According to these reports,

In the village of Kagalniksk . . . the fascist cannibals forced all 38 of the Jewish families into a warehouse. For a whole month they tortured them . . . and then shot them all. There were at least 200 people there. The property of the victims was stolen by the police. From the beginning of the occupation of Mechetinsk, the Hitlerites carried out barbaric acts against 48 local Jewish families and Jews who had been evacuated there. All the Jews were banished to a ravine and shot. With the occupation of the village of Proletarsk, an order was issued by the military commander that anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Jews must inform military HQ immediately. . . . Anyone harboring a Jew will be shot. . . . The Germans captured and murdered all the Jews. . . . In the town of Salsk, more than 3,000 civilians were shot . . . mainly Jews. . . . All the Jews were led through the streets of the town of Zernograd . . . and shot. . . . Their bodies were thrown into the ravine. . . .

The entire Jewish population was liquidated in the town of Elista in the autonomous republic of Kalmikya, during the period under occupation, between August 12 and December 31, 1942. . . . The Germans led them all to a ravine between Orshan and Voznesenovka and shot them. . . . Ninety-three Jewish families were exterminated, a total of over 300 people.¹⁹

Stalingrad had a prewar Jewish population numbering some 4,500, and the towns and townships in its vicinity housed Jewish refugees from the occupied territories. As the Germans were approaching, some of the city's Jews were evacuated along with institutions and heavy industries to the east, across the Volga.

Although many had been evacuated or had managed to escape, hundreds of Jews still remained in Stalingrad and its vicinity under German occupation. A military administration was established in the city. Police forces included German gendarmes and two Ukrainian police battalions brought in from Kharkov, but

there was no Sipo in Stalingrad. But even though the battlefront divided the city and fierce battles took place near the military HQ, anti-Jewish activity went on as usual. When the city's military commander, Major Gottlieb Schpeidel, was asked by his Soviet captors about his role in Stalingrad, he replied, "The German policy in Stalingrad, as in all the occupied territories, was summed up in the need to be rid of the Soviet activists, communists, and Jews, to remove them from the city, and to hand them over to the Gestapo to be shot."²⁰

Most of the Jews caught in the city were shot on the spot; some were hanged. A German officer recalled that on arrival in Stalingrad in early September 1942, he saw "in one of the streets in the southern part of the city, two people hanging from telegraph poles. A sign posted beneath them stated that they were Jews who had tried to penetrate a German military unit, through the use of false identities."²¹ Whenever Germans found Jews hiding in shelters along with other citizens, they pulled them out and shot them.²² According to a Soviet committee of inquiry, a pit was found in the municipal cemetery in the Derzhinsk quarter containing the bodies of 516 men, women, and children. Another pit was discovered in the "May 8" park near the regional German Ortskommandatur containing the bodies of 31 people, including children.²³

The city's military administration ordered the remaining civilian population to make their way toward the town of Kalach. From there they were sent to a large, newly erected camp near the town of Belaya Kalitva, where many thousands of Stalingrad's inhabitants were already concentrated. On the way to the camp and within it the Germans checked identity papers; all Jews were taken out and executed.²⁴

Most of the Jewish refugees in townships and villages in the occupied western regions of the district of Stalingrad had come from the Ukraine.²⁵ Before murdering them, the Germans concentrated these Jews in the village of Kamenka, in the Voroshilov region of Stalingrad district. According to one of the villagers:

On September 15, 1942, the occupying German forces began bringing in Jews from the villages of Zhotovo and Kovalevka to Kamenka. They were forced into a schoolhouse. . . . One hundred and sixty-four people were crowded into the schoolhouse, all women and children. . . . Three covered cars with doors that sealed hermetically appeared on October 8. The women and children were boarded on these cars, supposedly in order to transfer them to Rostov. In fact, the people were taken to a ravine 2 kilometers away and murdered on the way.²⁶

Jews from the villages of Aksai²⁷ and Peregruznoe²⁸ in the region of Voroshilov; in the Stalindorf kolkhoz, in the Klechev region;²⁹ the Telman kolkhoz,³⁰ and elsewhere were executed in a similar way.

On its advance toward the Caucasus, the German army captured Krasnodarski-Krai, Stavropolski-Krai, the western part of the autonomous republic of Kalmykia, and the northern ridges of the Caucasian Mountains, including the autonomous republics of Kabardino-Balkar and Severo-Osetia. The prewar Jewish community in these regions had been small,³¹ but because the region was considered safe, thousands of Jewish refugees arrived from the territories under German occupation. Moreover, many institutes of science with their staff (including large numbers of Jews) were evacuated to this region.

Einsatzgruppe D was active in the region, under the command of Oberführer Walter Bierkamp, who had replaced Otto Ohlendorf in July 1942. Bierkamp established his headquarters in the town of Stavropol. A battalion known as “Bergman” (mountain man) operated as a police force in the Nalchik region and consisted of Muslim prisoners of war from the Caucasus, who had volunteered to serve alongside the Germans. The battalion had been established in the fall of 1941, under the command of Theodor Oberländer.

Sonderkommando 10a arrived in the town of Krasnodar when it fell to the Germans on August 12, 1942. On August 21 and 22, all the Jews were ordered to report for transfer to a certain neighborhood in the city. They were taken to the Pervomaisk woods, where they were shot.³² Many of the city’s Jews did not obey the order, but they, too, were eventually caught and shot. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry report, the number of civilians—women, old people, and children—murdered in Krasnodar was in excess of 13,000.³³ Almost all were Jews.

Novorossiisk fell to the Germans on August 10, 1942. Of its original population of some 100,000, only around 40,000 remained. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry:

On October 15, 1942, the German command issued an order informing the Jews that a Jewish community [council] has been established in order to improve the lives of the Jews. . . . The Jews were ordered to report with their belongings and their valuables the following day for transfer to one of the villages in the country of Krasnodar, where, supposedly, all the Jews of the river Kuban region were already concentrated. More than 1,000 Jewish old people, women, and children reported next to the Gestapo building on the morning of October 16, 1942. . . . The people were transferred by trucks to the outskirts of town to the Sunzunskai-Kosa region and shot.³⁴

An especially vicious act of murder was carried out in the village of Ladozhenskaia on the river Kuban, northeast of Krasnodar. According to a Soviet

committee of inquiry: “The inhabitants of Ladozheskaia witnessed the horrible sight of dead women, children, and old people floating on the river Kuban. According to the testimony of eight non-Jewish locals, some 3,000 Jews were tortured to death and drowned in the Kuban by the German murderers and their collaborators.”³⁵

A Soviet committee of inquiry report dealing with the village of Otradnaia, southeast of the town of Stavropol, makes specific mention of the fact that the murdered Jews were refugees:

In one day the Gestapo arrested all the evacuated Jews. On October 10, all the prisoners were transferred by truck to a place 2 kilometers across the river Urup, where they were all shot. . . . In February 1943, after liberation, the pit was opened to reveal the bodies of 483 Jews.³⁶

Thousands of Jews from the occupied Soviet territories who took refuge in dozens of townships and villages across the Krasnodar region during the latter half of 1941 were murdered.³⁷ A unit of local volunteers, some of whom were former prisoners of war, joined Sonderkommando 10a in carrying out the murders in Krasnodar. The unit played an active part in murdering Jews and other civilians.³⁸

Stavropol fell to the Germans on August 3, 1942. The town’s Jews were informed on August 11 of the establishment of a Jewish council, and special instructions were included for the refugees, who formed most of the town’s Jewish population:

All Jews without exception . . . who came to Stavropol after June 22, 1941, are required to report on August 12, 1942, at 07:00 in Ermarochna Square. . . . Problems that have arisen due to war activity make it imperative to transfer all the above mentioned people to locations that are free of population.³⁹

On August 12, 3,500 Jewish refugees reported to the designated place and were taken out of town to a location near the airport, where they were shot. On August 13, the town’s indigenous Jews were ordered to report for registration and to be issued armbands. About 500 Jews obeyed the order and, on August 14, were taken to a site near the psychiatric hospital and shot.⁴⁰ The first and separate orders to the town’s Jewish refugees was aimed at deceiving them into believing that, since they were not permanent inhabitants, it was logical for them to be transferred elsewhere.

Towns to the southeast of Stavropol — Kislovodsk, Piatigorsk, Esentuki, and the spa town of Mineralnye-Vodi — were captured by the Germans on August 10 and 11, 1942. Within a few days, Einsatzkommando 12 had arrived in the region,

and the murder of the Jews was carried out in a single operation alongside an antitank trench near Mineralnye-Vodi. Einsatzkommando 12 member R. Pfeifer described the massacre and its implementation:

I arrived at Mineralnye-Vodi on August 30. There, in the office of the military governor, we conducted a briefing, with the participation of the field Gendarmerie and the local police. At that meeting the final timetable and the site of the massacre were determined—an antitank trench near the glass factory. . . . A road and a railroad led to the site. It was an open area, easy to cordon off and difficult to escape from. . . . The local police commander, Zavadski, introduced us to Tarasov Timofei, who was appointed commander of the murder squad. . . . It was important for the people not to realize that the registration and concentration were merely a ruse. . . . I summoned the most distinguished of the Jews. I appointed a ‘Jewish committee’ and deferred to the committee with overstated politeness. . . . Later, we collected all those who had registered and took them to the field behind Mineralnye-Vodi. We met the dates we had determined for liquidation.⁴¹

The military governor of Mineralnye-Vodi, Major Paul Bart, ordered all the Jews to be concentrated in the courtyard of the town’s school on September 1, 1942. The local police commander supervised the loading of the Jews onto railway cars, which transferred them to an antitank trench, where they were shot. About 2,800 Jews from Piatigorsk were brought over several days following this massacre to the same site to be murdered, some in gas vans.⁴²

The Jews of Kislovodsk suffered a similar fate. On August 16, 1942, the town’s military governor appointed a Jewish council, and the Jews were forced to pay a “contribution” tax. A Soviet committee of inquiry estimated the overall value of the money, gold, and other valuables collected from the Jews at 5 million rubles. The town’s military command (Feldkommandur 12) published an order according to which:

In order to populate the sparsely populated regions of the Ukraine, the Jewish inhabitants of the town of Kislovodsk, as well as Jews with no permanent residence, are required to report on Wednesday, September 9, 1942, at 05:00 a.m. Berlin time (06:00 Moscow time) at the loading dock of the Kislovodsk railway station. The train will depart at 06:00 (07:00 Moscow time). Each Jew will bring with him luggage not exceeding 20 kilos in weight (including enough food for at least two days). The German authorities will later supply food at railway stations. . . . In order to send on their remaining property, each family is required to pack and mark everything, underwear, etc., and label it

clearly with their owner's name. Feldkommandatur 12 is responsible for the safekeeping of all property.⁴³

The wording of the order, the stress placed on the fact that they were being sent to “populate the sparsely populated regions of the Ukraine,” the determination of the exact hour of meeting and of departure (and the time differences between Moscow and Berlin), the fact that they were required to take food for two days, after which they would receive supplies from the German authorities along the way, the military command's promise to safeguard all property left behind in their homes—all these were aimed at deceiving the Jews as to what awaited them. Since the order was issued on behalf of the military command, the army was a full partner to the deceit and murder of the Jews. Realizing what awaited them, some of the Jews committed suicide. Between 1,800 and 2,000 Jews gathered at the Kislovodsk railway station on the morning of September 6. They were loaded onto eighteen freight trucks, taken under armed guard to Mineralnye-Vodi, and shot. Some of them were shot while trying to escape. On September 19, 1942, one day after the massacre of the Jews of Kislovodsk, and under the same pretext of being sent to “populate the sparsely populated regions of the Ukraine,” some 2,000 Jews were brought to Mineralnye-Vodi from Esentuki and shot.⁴⁴ A further 1,000 Jews were brought to Mineralnye-Vodi from Zeleznovodsk to be murdered. Altogether, between September 1 and 10, 1942, at least 6,300 Jews were murdered at Mineralnye-Vodi.⁴⁵ Two hundred and fifty Jews were shot next to an antitank trench in the town of Georgevsk, east of Mineralnye-Vodi.⁴⁶

According to a research based mainly on Soviet sources, 20,500–22,000 Jews were murdered in the regions of Krasnodarski-Krai, 19,700–25,000 Jews in Stavropolski-Krai, and 1,500–1,800 Jews in the occupied regions of the autonomous republic of Kalmykia.⁴⁷

MOUNTAIN JEWS

The autonomous republics of Kabardino-Balkar and Severo-Osetia in the Stavropolski-Krai region captured by the Germans during the summer and fall of 1942 had an indigenous Jewish population known as Gorskie Evrei (Mountain Jews).⁴⁸ Most of these Jews lived in the eastern regions of the Caucasus, in the Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, and the autonomous republic of Dagestan. The racial origins of the Mountain Jews were investigated by the German administration and were of interest to German scientific institutions.⁴⁹ The Einsatzgruppen and other murder squads first encountered the Mountain Jews on a kolkhoz in the Crimea and dealt with them as with all the other Jews of the Crimea, by murdering them in late February 1942.

With the capture in late August 1942 of the Mozdok region of the Severo-Osetia autonomous republic and the Nalchik region of the autonomous republic of Kabardino-Balkar in late October 1942, the Germans encountered large concentrations of Mountain Jews. In the Mozdok area the Germans captured two villages, Manzhinsk and Bogdanovka, where they did not identify their inhabitants, who resembled the rest of the region's population, as Jews. It was the local population that betrayed them as Jews.⁵⁰

A massacre took place in Bogdanovka in September 1942. The Jews were told that they were being evacuated to the rear areas because their village was too close to the front line. They were then shot near the village. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry report describing this action: "The Germans concentrated 450 Jews in the village of Bogdanovka, forced them to dig themselves a grave, and then shot them."⁵¹

A massacre took place in Manzhinsk on October 19, 1942. The Jews were rounded up and brought to the village of Kurskaia, about 20 kilometers away, where Germans and members of the local police shot 180. In Bogdanovka and Manzhinsk, dozens were saved by local non-Jews.⁵²

The town of Mozdok, north of the river Terek, was under German occupation for more than four months, from late August 1942 until early January 1943. The Germans did not succeed in crossing the Terek, which left the town very close to the front. The local Jews of Mozdok who remained under German occupation were joined by survivors of the Manzhinsk and Bogdanovka massacres. Shmuel Matveyev from Manzhinsk testified, "I came to Mozdok with my family. . . . We were under German occupation. Many Jews there had escaped from our village, some of them to Nalchik and others to Mozdok. The Germans didn't touch us. . . . Mozdok was on the front and they didn't deal with Jews on the front line. That is how we survived. There were a lot of local Jews there, Mountain Jews and others of Ashkenazi origin. . . . In early January a [Soviet] attack began, and Mozdok was liberated."⁵³ In Severo-Osetia 3,000–3,300 Jews were killed, most of them refugees.⁵⁴

The town of Nalchik, capital of Kabardino-Balkar, fell to the Germans on October 28, 1942. On the eve of war its Jewish population had numbered above 3,000. They were joined during the war by Jewish refugees. The fate of the Mountain Jews of the Nalchik region differed from that of those in other German-occupied Soviet territories. These Jews had lived in the regions for many generations and enjoyed friendly relations with their Muslim neighbors, who saw them as fellow members of the indigenous Caucasian nations and races. Wishing to cultivate the support of the Muslim population, the German administration in the Caucasus established a National Council in Kabardino-Balkar. In December

1942 the town was visited by Otto Brautigam, deputy head of the political department in the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories and representative of this ministry in the OKH headquarters. In his memoirs, Brautigam wrote that he wished to prevent the annihilation of the Mountain Jews, and when he mentioned the matter to the military command responsible for the region, he was told that the Jewish issue was not under their jurisdiction and that he should take up the matter with W. Bierkamp, commander of Einsatzgruppe D. On his meeting with Bierkamp, Brautigam wrote:

I explained to him that I was responsible for the forming of [German] policy [in the region], but that I was unable to take responsibility for this so long as that innocent nation of Mountain Jews was being subjected to the same cruel methods which were considered suitable for the other Jews. I based my claims on two main arguments: due to the diversity of the many Caucasian nations, they would not understand the cruel anti-Jewish persecution of the Mountain Jews, who have caused us no harm. They are liable to see this as German policy directed against the Caucasian nations and to adopt a hostile attitude toward Germany. . . . I claimed that, ethnically, the Mountain Jews are not Jews at all, but a small and harmless mountain nation, who had adopted the Jewish religion several centuries ago. . . . Herr Bierkamp listened intently and replied in the end that he was unable to give me an immediate reply and that within a few days he would personally check the behavior of the Mountain Jews.⁵⁵

According to Brautigam, Bierkamp informed him later that he had “visited the Mountain Jews and found [his] description of them to be absolutely correct. The people in question are not Jews, but a nation of mountain shepherds, with a strong resemblance to the Turks.” Confirmation of Bierkamp’s position can also be found in other sources.⁵⁶ The local authorities also acted to save the Mountain Jews. Thus, according to Salim Shadov, head of the National Council of Kabardino-Balkar:

November 1942 . . . I was approached, in my capacity of prime minister, by a delegation of Mountain Jews, led by Mr. Shabaev. The Jewish delegation informed me that the ss command had conducted registration of all the Mountain Jews . . . and they now feared their physical annihilation as Jews. . . . I undertook full responsibility and informed them [the Germans] that the Mountain Jews are Tats and a mountain tribe similar to the Kabardines and the Balkars. Moreover, I declared that these Mountain Jews are considered to be a population well rooted in this region. . . . The lifestyle, tradition, mode of dress, and culture of the Mountain Jews are identical to those of other mountain tribes. . . . At my suggestion, a committee studied the lifestyle and

traditions of the Tats by visiting the homes of the Jews. My demand persuaded the command of the German army, as well as the command of the SS and SD, and they agreed that the Tats—the Mountain Jews—are a mountain tribe, that is not to be distinguished from the other mountain tribes of the northern Caucasus.⁵⁷

The fact that the local administration in Kabardino-Balkar intervened on their behalf is verified in testimonies by the Mountain Jews of Nalchik.⁵⁸ As a result of Brautigam's appeal and that of the Kabardino-Balkar leader, members of the German administration as well as the Sipo visited the Mountain Jews in order to examine their lifestyle and customs.

These visits raised doubts as to the racial origins of the Mountain Jews. Their extermination was postponed, and the issue was passed over to racial experts in Berlin. These examinations and analyses saved the lives of most—but not all—of the Jews of Nalchik. Fourteen or 15 families of Mountain Jews, consisting of about 100 people, had been executed prior to the decision to check their racial origins.⁵⁹ Apart from these, other local Jews and Jewish refugees from elsewhere were also murdered. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry into German war crimes in Nalchik, a grave was found containing the bodies of 600 local inhabitants, and the names of the murdered included those of Jews. The massacre had been carried out in an antitank trench behind the airport, some 3 kilometers out of town.⁶⁰

The decision to postpone the annihilation of the Mountain Jews until their racial status could be determined came too late for the Mountain Jews of Mozdok and other regions, since they had already been murdered. Nalchik was liberated after nine weeks of occupation, on January 4, 1943, before Berlin had reached a decision on the racial status of the Mountain Jews. Of an estimated 5,000 Mountain Jews who lived under German occupation, about 1,000 were murdered. No numerical data exists regarding the Jewish refugees who remained under German occupation, although these may be estimated as having been in the thousands. A similar fate was shared by a small number of Jews who lived in the area, but were not part of the Mountain Jewish community.

22

Transnistria

Life in the Shadow of Death

“STABILIZATION OF THE SITUATION”:

SPRING AND SUMMER 1942

The onset of spring 1942 brought an end to the mass murders of Jews in Odessa, Bogdanovka, Domanevka, and Akmechetka. With a few exceptions the mass deportations stopped from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria. Changes in weather also resulted in a reduced death toll inside the ghettos and labor camps from cold and disease. Spring, therefore, partially alleviated the condition of the 90,000 to 95,000 Jews still alive in Transnistria. But Jews continued to be banished in the thousands toward the river Bug and closer to the areas that were under sole control of the Germans. Some of them were banished across the Bug and murdered by the Germans. Inside Transnistria, Jews were held under inhuman conditions in towns and camps, and thousands of them died of starvation or disease.

Nonetheless, compared with their situation during the fall and winter of 1941, the Jews were now enjoying a measure of stability. The relative easing-up allowed the Jews and their leaders to take action toward alleviating their situation and to save the lives of as many as possible. Such activity often conformed with the interests of the Romanian authorities, whose main objective was economic exploitation, and with those of the corrupt Romanian officials, who constantly sought kickbacks and perks for themselves. The Jews' struggle for survival had begun on the arrival of the deportees to Transnistria, although the relative stability in spring and summer 1942 created conditions for Jewish initiative, whose objectives were:

To allow more permanent settlement for Jews and end their deportation from place to place, with all the attendant torture and death. The aim was to settle in western Transnistria, nearer to the river Dnestr, where it was easier to maintain ties with and be helped by the Romanian Jewish community.

These locations were also far from the river Bug and the threat of being sent across it to German labor camps, where death awaited.

To prove to the Romanian administration that the Jews contributed to the economic exploitation of the region in which they lived and that it was worthwhile to leave them there.

Jews who had managed to remain within their communal framework had an advantage over individuals and unaffiliated groups, even as they moved for weeks on end across deportation routes to destinations determined by the Romanians. Such communities traveled with their original leaders, who were responsible for arranging accommodations at the various locations. Chances of survival for the individuals within a community were therefore greater than for those who found themselves fending for themselves in the harsh reality of Transnistria. The wealthier members of the community, who had managed to bring some of their valuables and cash, had more chance of survival than others; they were able to purchase food, and by bribing Romanian officials and sometimes even members of the Jewish councils, some were able to avoid being sent to the labor camps.¹

Around 150 ghettos—or “colonies,” as the Romanians coined them—were established in Transnistria. Most of them were located in Transnistria’s northern regions, near the towns of Mogilev-Podolsky, Shargorod, Tulchin, and Bershad. Several ghettos were established in the Balta region of central Transnistria. Most of the ghettos accommodated between several dozen and several thousand Jews. Mogilev-Podolsky was the largest of the ghettos with a population that ranged during its various stages between 10,000 and 15,000. Most of the deportees from Bukovina were brought to the areas surrounding Mogilev-Podolsky and Tulchin. Most of the Bessarabian Jews were sent to the Balta area, with some of them going to the more northern regions. The large majority of local Jews who survived the pre-spring 1942 waves of annihilations in the northern parts of Transnistria now lived alongside the deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina. Some of them rented rooms in their apartments to the deportees. They were also able to make use of their knowledge of the local language and ties with the non-Jewish population, from whom they purchased food and with whom they mediated on behalf of the deportees.

As in other parts of the Nazi-occupied territories of the Soviet Union, the Romanians appointed Jewish ghetto leaders and committees, similar to the Jewish councils. In many places the Jews elected their own representatives to face the local Romanian authorities. The ghetto leaders and committees were responsible for carrying out orders issued by the administration and especially for supplying the manpower required for forced labor.

In February 1942 the military governor of Bukovina, General Calotescu Corneliu, ordered the deportations of “unwanted” Jews to be renewed. The mayor of Chernovtsy, Popovitchi, who had protected the town’s remaining 20,000 Jews during the October and November 1941 deportations, was dismissed from his post in June 1942. During that month, some 5,000 people were deported to Transnistria, including several hundred from Dorohoi and a few hundred of the remaining Jews in Bessarabia. Most of the deportees were sent to camps in the county of Tulchin, in the vicinity of the Bug. In August and September some of them were taken to German labor camps east of the Bug, where most perished.²

Some 2,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria from central Romania during September 1942. Some of them were suspected of communist activity, and others had registered during the latter half of 1940 for emigration to the Soviet Union. One thousand were transferred to the Vapniarka camp, where conditions were harsh and many perished.³

The small Odessa ghetto, located in the hospital in Slobodka, was liquidated with its 400 Jews in June 1942. According to an announcement in Odessa, “On June 10, the hospital-ghetto in Slobodka was finally closed. . . . On that day, the last remaining Jews were transferred to Berezovka. . . . Any Jews caught or discovered after June 10 will be transferred to prison and tried before a military tribunal.”⁴

Two other deportations from Odessa, in April and May, preceded the June deportation, although no data exists as to their extent; it would appear that the deportees were executed. The June deportees were taken to Domanevka and sent to work on the local farms.⁵ One thousand Jews, some from among those deported from central Romania and some from among the last remaining Jews from Odessa, were brought to the Vasilinovo district and handed over to a unit of local Germans, who murdered them.⁶

News of the desperate state of the deportees in Transnistria reached Jewish communities in Bucharest and elsewhere in Romania via Romanian army officers and officials, who sometimes also brought letters from the deportees calling for help. Individuals sent money to their deported friends and relatives by bribing Romanian military officers and officials to do so.

Following efforts by Jewish community leaders in Romania, Antonescu’s office granted official approval on May 20, 1942, for money, medicines, clothing, and food to be sent to the Jews in Transnistria. The Romanian Jewish leadership established an aid committee. Funding was raised among the Jews of Romania and was received indirectly from the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). The Romanian authorities hindered the aid program, and this, together

with confiscation and robbery on the way to Transnistria, restricted the scope of the aid parcels. Dispatches of aid parcels increased toward the end of 1942. Aid was distributed to the Jews via the Jewish committees active in the camps and ghettos.⁷

LIFE IN THE GHETTOS

The Romanian authorities policy affected life in the Transnistrian ghettos. But conditions also depended on the talents, integrity, and work done by the Jewish community leaders in the ghettos. The Jewish council in Mogilev-Podolsky is a typical example of this.

Around 27,000 Jews—half of the deportees from Bukovina—were concentrated in the Mogilev-Podolsky region. The town was an economical center, and many of the deportees hoped to find accommodation and employment there. The initiative of a few Jews made it possible for thousands of deportees to remain in the town—contrary to the designs of the Romanian authorities, who felt that there was no room in the semi-ruined town for the Jews. A prominent figure among these Jews was the engineer Ziegfried Jägendorf, who had held the rank of lieutenant in the Austrian army during World War I. Jägendorf managed to arrange a meeting with the town's Romanian prefect, Colonel Ion Baleanu, with whom he had served in the Austrian army and who knew that he was an engineer. To Jägendorf's request that conditions should be eased for the Jewish deportees and that they should be permitted to stay in the town, Baleanu replied:

You must realize that Jews cannot stay in Mogilev: we are establishing camps for them elsewhere in the district. . . . We need your services here in Mogilev. The power station was put out of action during the battles and further damaged when the Dnestr overflowed its banks. I want you to select a few electricians and mechanics from your ranks, four or five, perhaps.⁸

Jägendorf convinced the town's Romanian authorities that the repair and reopening of the power station would require hundreds of Jewish workers, and so they were permitted to remain in the town with their families. After Jägendorf and his employees reinstated the town's electricity supply, further manufacturing plants were established in which Jews were employed. One of Jägendorf's enterprises was a metal foundry, to which he gave the name "Turnatoria." It produced various commodities, including heaters for government officials and the local population, metal parts for repairing bridges over the Dnestr, and other objects; in the beginning of 1942 more than 1,000 Jews were employed in these plants. For the deportees these initiatives were salvation. Jägendorf was elected

chairman of the thirteen-man Jewish council, and, except for the latter half of 1942, he served in this position for as long as the ghetto existed.⁹

Apart from the Jews employed in various enterprises whose stay in the town was sanctioned by the authorities, hundreds of other Jews remained there illegally. The Jews lived in the town's ghetto and in a transit camp. Although the ghetto was unfenced and had no gates, its population suffered from terrible overcrowding. Some 3,500 people died in a typhus epidemic between January and April 1942. Without help from the Romanian authorities, the ghetto hospital and the Jewish doctors were unable to provide more than minimal relief to the suffering inhabitants. Still, life in Mogilev-Podolsky was preferable to life in other places in Transnistria, and Jews on the run continued to flow in. With the help of the Jewish council, some of the newcomers were given the identity and work papers of others who had died in the epidemic. By summer of 1942, the Jewish population of Mogilev-Podolsky consisted of around 12,000 Jewish deportees and some 5,000 local Jews.¹⁰ In terms of the times and in comparison with other places in Transnistria, workers in the various manufacturing plants lived under conditions that could be categorized as "reasonable." A soup kitchen fed the ghetto's needy, and they had an old-people's home, two orphanages, and a school.¹¹

The Romanian authorities decided to reduce the number of Jews in Mogilev-Podolsky, and some 3,000 were banished in late May and early June 1942 to the abandoned and rundown Scazinet camp, about 12 kilometers south of town. The camp was guarded by Ukrainian police and Romanian gendarmes, who were cruel to the exiles. Conditions in this camp were harsh; food was almost nonexistent, and there was a dire shortage of water. About half the camp's population died in the camp, which existed until September 12, 1942, when 1,500 Jews were returned to Mogilev-Podolsky. A few hundred were sent elsewhere.¹²

Some 3,000 Jews were deported in October 1942 to the terrible Pechora camp on the banks of the River Bug. The deportees were supposed to have been chosen from among the poorest unemployed members of the community. A very few of the inmates of this camp survived, mainly those who escaped before starving to death. There were cases of cannibalism in the camp, whose inmates dwindled within a year to only a few dozen.¹³

The second largest ghetto in Transnistria was established in Shargorod, northeast of Mogilev-Podolsky. The township's prewar Jewish population had numbered around 1,700. Between October and December 1941, deportees were brought to Shargorod, and these, together with the locals, brought the township's Jewish population to around 9,000. A horribly overcrowded ghetto was established.¹⁴

During the first months after their arrival in Shargorod, the deportees split into communities according to their town of origin. Exiles from Suceava in Bukovina,

who brought with them money and some property, set up a soup kitchen for the benefit of their community's needy. Exiles from Dorohoi and elsewhere, on the other hand, arrived in Shargorod destitute and starving. Only after the winter of 1941-42, when members of the various communities erected a united committee, were a bakery and soup kitchen established—for the benefit of all the Jewish needy—as well as shops, where food products bought by the committee were sold at reduced prices. Still this was not sufficient to satisfy the hunger of many of the ghetto's Jews. A Jewish police force was established in the ghetto to guard its inhabitants against attacks by Ukrainian hooligans.

The medical services established in the ghetto were also inadequate, since a dearth of medical supplies and almost no isolation wards made it impossible to block a typhus epidemic early in 1942. Even the medical staff was not immune to the disease, and 12 of the ghetto's 27 doctors died fighting the epidemic. Altogether, 1,449 people died in the typhus epidemic in Shargorod. Once a cleaning service and a workshop for the manufacture of soap had been established in the ghetto, as well as public lavatories and baths, the number of typhus victims dropped and the epidemic was curbed. Tailors and cobblers, who set up workshops in the ghetto, as did mechanics and other artisans, also served the local Ukrainian population, and their income went toward funding the committee's activities.

Improved conditions in the ghetto attracted Jews escaping from elsewhere, including Ukrainian Jews from the German-occupied regions east of the river Bug, for whom escape to Transnistria meant salvation. The Jewish committee welcomed 400 escapees to the Shargorod ghetto, hid them from the Romanian authorities, and provided them with the necessary documents. The committee established an orphanage that provided a home for 187 children.¹⁵

Conditions in the larger ghettos of Transnistria, such as Bershad, Zhmerinka, Dzhurin, and Kopaigorod, each of which housed several thousand Jews, were similar to those in Mogilev-Podolsky and Shargorod. Nonetheless, each place had its own unique characteristics, which were influenced largely by the attitudes of the local authorities. Although the conditions under which the Jews were forced to live in the large ghettos were harsh, the fact that they were located in towns meant that there was more potential to find a roof and some kind of employment. Also, the possibility to have direct contact with the corrupt Romanian authorities—through which it was possible to obtain concessions in return for bribes—made their lives more bearable. It was easier, too, for the Jews of the larger towns and townships to maintain connections with their families in Romania and to receive aid from them.

Life was much harder in the villages and smaller townships, to which thousands of Jews were sent. With their Ukrainian population and few local Jews, these places

were usually off the main thoroughfares. Their inhabitants were mostly poor and lived in mean dwellings. Most of the Jews deported to these regions were unable to find accommodation and employment and suffered constant hunger; help from the Jews of Romania did not reach these remote regions. Solomon Shapira wrote in his memoir about the village of Popovtsy, in the district of Kopaigorod, one of the places to which Jews were deported:

Popovtsy was a typical Ukrainian village. . . . In the entire village, there was only one “public toilet,” which consisted of an elongated dugout gutter. . . . While using it, one had to be careful not to fall in. A ghetto was established in the village square and in the alleyways nearby. . . . The local Jews were wary and suspicious. Our arrival frightened them. . . . Feelings and attitudes of the local Christian population toward us were mixed. Those whose sons had withdrawn along with the Soviet army were more or less kind to us. But the ones who had suffered under the Soviets, they passed over to the German side and hated us. . . . There were about 1,000 of us deportees, living in the houses of local Jews in the ghetto and some of us—in cow sheds, stables and ruined farm buildings left over from the former kolkhoz. . . . We were people sentenced to die of hunger, cold, epidemics, relying on the goodwill of the gendarmes and the authorities. . . . We slept on the ground, on a layer of straw, huddling up to each other in order to keep warm. . . . In such conditions, attempts to survive became an ongoing tragedy. It began with a dash to the village to try to find work of some sort, constantly afraid of bumping into a Romanian gendarme, or a Ukrainian Schutzmann, which meant certain death. . . . When we knocked on doors, no one opened, afraid of catching a disease. Many of the villagers themselves were on the verge of starvation. . . . The tattered beggars looked enviously at the dogs, chained up in the yards, with their bowls of food scraps, or even mamaliga [cornmeal mush]. How happy they would have been to share the food of these dogs.¹⁶

Conditions in Popovtsy were not unusual. It was common to other villages and townships throughout Transnistria, to which Jews were deported. The epidemics of the winter of 1941–42 left in their wake hundreds of orphaned children, and to these were added the children whose parents had been sent to labor camps, leaving them to fend for themselves in the ghetto. Such children wandered around the ghetto or in the Ukrainian neighborhoods, begging or rummaging in garbage cans. According to an eyewitness:

Orphaned children, walking skeletons wrapped in rags, heads covered with paper as the only means of protection against the rain, their feet in rags tied on with string; they made their way from door to door asking for a potato peel

or some other scrap of food. I shall never forget little Roshkale. A girl of no more than four years old, orphaned of both parents, eyes as black as coal, a big sack hanging on her shoulder, knocking on doors and asking, in a pitiful voice, 'Please, a potato, a piece of bread.' . . . Nothing daunted her, not the barking of dogs, nor the curses of the Ukrainian peasants who were sick of the constant pathetic whines of the poor knocking at their doors, nor even the wickedness of the children who threw stones at her.¹⁷

One expression of solidarity in the ghettos was the concern for these orphaned children. In the larger ghettos, orphanages were established with the help of funds from the Romanian Jewish community, where children received enough food to keep them alive.

Notwithstanding the sad state of the Jews in Transnistria, there were still several thousand Jews remaining in the few ghettos and camps east of the Bug. Escape to Transnistria was for them a chance to survive. The last of those ghettos were liquidated during the spring and autumn of 1942.¹⁸ The number of Jews escaping from the regions east of the Bug to Transnistria was in the hundreds.

Relations between the local Jews and the deportees from Romania—two groups with different cultural backgrounds—were complicated. The main encounter between the two groups took place in the ghettos of north Transnistria, where the majority of deportees were from Bukovina. These Jews, whose background was German and Romanian, had brought with them the culture and languages of these two countries, and this affinity made it easier for them to maintain ties with the Romanian authorities. They had arrived in Transnistria accompanied by their leaders, and among them were many artisans, medical professionals, and engineers.

The local Jews, on the other hand, had no common language with the Romanian authorities; mobilization into the army and evacuation of factories and institutions prior to the German occupation meant that most of the region's remaining Jewish population were old people, women, and children, with only a few artisans among them to provide any kind of economic basis on which to lean. Their only advantages were the houses they occupied—in which they were able to accommodate some of the newcomers—and their familiarity with the language and the local Ukrainians. Under these circumstances, and being a majority, the deportees became the main factor in the newly formed Jewish community, and it was they who governed the ghettos. They were also the dominant factor in management and among the workers in the plants and workshops that served the Romanian administration and the local population, and, as such, justified their existence in the region and provided some income. And, notwithstanding the differences

between them, their common destiny and Jewish solidarity gradually helped to bring the two Jewish groups closer, under the more stable conditions that evolved during 1942. The local Jews enjoyed the organizational talents of the deportees and the workshops and institutions they established, which included soup kitchens, orphanages, and medical services; they also enjoyed the aid that started arriving from the Jewish community in Romania. The deportees, for their part, used their local counterparts' connections with the local Ukrainian population, bartering their belongings for food.

The Romanian administration was wary of the local Jews and suspected them of being communist sympathizers and of collaborating with groups of partisans who started appearing toward the end of 1942 in the forests of northern Transnistria. When the need arose to fill quotas for forced labor details, the authorities chose people from among the local Jewish population who did not have the necessary financial means to buy their way out of the transport or who had no ties with local authority officials.¹⁹ It is reasonable to assume that, when required to supply human quotas for labor transports, the Jewish ghetto committees preferred to send local Jews rather than members of their own communities.

The ghettos in Transnistria were for the most part unguarded, open, and unfenced. Ties between the ghetto inhabitants and the local Christian population were therefore relatively easy to maintain, especially with regard to the exchange of goods and food, which was advantageous to all sides.

In their testimonies many Jews stressed the cruelty they suffered at the hands of the Ukrainian police. On the other hand, individual Jews on the run from camps on their way to ghettos and escaping camps east of the Bug describe the attitudes of peasants toward them in quite positive terms. Thus, according to Evgenia Lavrova, who escaped to Transnistria from the ghetto in Bar:

On the way to Kopaigorod we knocked on the doors of farmhouses, asking for food and a place to spend the night. . . . There were all kinds of people: some who allowed us in and others who refused. . . . Near Kopaigorod we came across a wagon driven by two men, an old man and a young man, who were taking sugar beet to the mill. "Where are you heading for, Zhidivki [Jewesses]?" asked the younger man, but was silenced by the older man's look of disapproval. We climbed up on the wagon and, as we passed the Romanian guard posts, they pretended to hug us. "We are delivering sugar beet," said the older man and whipped the horses. . . . We reached Kopaigorod in the Romanian zone. A hope for life had appeared.²⁰

For the Jews in Transnistria, the period between spring 1942 and winter 1942–43 was one of struggle for survival. The struggle took place under appalling condi-

tions: hunger, brutal accommodations, and a constant search for employment to provide the very basic form of existence.

Although there was an easing up of the harsh conditions after the spring of 1942, the number of Jews in the area gradually decreased. According to data in the possession of the Jewish Aid for Transnistria's Jews Committee, the number of Jews in early January 1943 stood at 73,891.²¹ Assuming that these data were incomplete, the number may be assessed as being at least 75,000. In early spring 1942, the Jewish population in Transnistria numbered between 90,000 and 95,000, and these were joined by a further 7,000 of the summer 1942 deportees from central Romania. Based on these statistics, the number of Jews who perished in Transnistria between April and December 1942 was between 20,000 and 25,000.

SIX

Mass Murder, Third Stage:
From Early 1943 until the
End of German Occupation

Liquidation of the Last Ghettos in Reichskommissariat Ostland

MILITARY SITUATION: GERMAN DEFEATS AND INCREASED NEED FOR MANPOWER

All the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union were liberated between early 1943 and summer 1944, with the exception of west Latvia. By the end of this period, during which the last of the ghettos and camps had been liquidated, the German army was fighting on Polish and German soil. The German army suffered heavy losses in Stalingrad and during the battles in 1943, and there was a dire need for new forces. In the Baltic states and the Ukraine, several divisions, to which recruitment was voluntary, were organized from among the local population. Some divisions were mobilized, on a voluntary basis, from Soviet prisoners of war.¹ All around about 1 million former Soviet prisoners of war served in military or police units under German command.² Inside Germany over 1.5 million Germans were already mobilized during 1942. Most of them had previously been employed in agriculture and industry, so there was now a need to fill their posts with foreign labor from the occupied states.³

Already in late March 1942, Fritz Sauckel, who was appointed by Hitler as the plenipotentiary for labor deployment in Germany, demanded that the civil and military authorities in the occupied territories provide Germany with hundreds of thousands of workers. Such demands grew in number as the war progressed.⁴ Attempts at voluntary recruitment failed, and the Germans were obliged to embark on forced recruitment, with heavy penalties for those who did not comply.⁵

In the forests of west Belorussia, in the Grodno, Novogrudok, and Vilnius districts, groups of Polish partisans of the Armia Krajowa started their operations in mid-1943. The AK formed the military arm of the Polish underground movement, which was subordinated to the Polish government-in-exile in London. This government had never accepted the annexation of west Belorussia and west

Ukraine to the Soviet Union and saw them as part of eastern Poland. Bloody clashes between the AK and Soviet partisans over control of the Belorussian forests ensued during the spring of 1944.⁶ The AK did not accept Jews, which it saw as a pro-Soviet element, into its ranks; moreover, in some places AK members murdered Jews in the forests and villages.

ANTI-JEWISH POLICY: DISCREPANCIES
BETWEEN ANNIHILATION AND THE
GROWING NEED FOR WORKING HANDS

The fate of the Jews remaining in camps and ghettos in the occupied Soviet territories during the period between early spring 1943 and the withdrawal of the German army in autumn 1944 depended on two things: Germany's policy of annihilating Jews and Germany's growing need for workers, which raised the importance of Jewish manpower. By early 1943, after the mass murders of 1941–42, this workforce, which had numbered some tens of thousands, was relatively restricted with regard to Germany's needs, but was still available and did not require forced recruitment; it was cheap; and there was a willingness to work as a way of surviving. Still, despite the difficulties involved in recruiting non-Jewish workers in the occupied Soviet territories and sending them to Germany, there was no fundamental policy change regarding exterminating the Jews. These policies included the gradual liquidation of the remaining ghettos, transferring the more essential workers to labor or concentration camps and murdering their families and any other Jews incapable of joining the workforce, and the gradual liquidation of workers in the camps. The objective was to ensure that no Jews remained alive in the areas liberated by the Soviet army.

The ideological need to exterminate the last of the Jews was reinforced by the fear that any surviving Jews would seek revenge for the terrible crimes committed against them by the Germans in the occupied Soviet territories. The fear was nurtured by the Germans in the propaganda they instilled in their soldiers. According to Omer Bartov: "Even more important than providing the troops with the ideal image of their own leadership, *Weltanschauung* and racial qualities, was the concerted attempt to terrorize them by visions of destruction at the hands of Judeo-Bolsheviks, to convince them that all the atrocities they had committed would be turned against them in case they failed to win." A German officer wrote on this subject in mid-February 1943, "May God allow the German people to find now the peace of mind and strength which would make it into the instrument needed by the Führer to protect the west from ruin, for what Asiatic hordes will not destroy will be annihilated by Jewish hatred and revenge."⁷

By spring 1943, the number of Jews remaining alive in the occupied territories of Soviet Union was between 310,000 and 320,000.⁸ On June 21, 1943, Himmler issued an order to the Higher SS and Police Leader in Ostland and the head of WVHA (Wirtschafts und Verwaltungshauptamt, main office of economy and administration, which was in charge of the concentration camps) on the liquidation of ghettos and concentration of able-bodied Jews in concentration camps:

1. I order that all the Jews still remaining in ghettos in the Ostland are to be collected in concentration camps.
2. I prohibit the exit of Jews from concentration camps for [outside] work, from August 1, 1943.
3. A concentration camp is to be built near Riga. . . . All private firms will be eliminated. . . . The chief of the SS WVHA is requested to see to it that there will be no shortfall in the production required by the Wehrmacht as a result of this reorganization.
4. Inmates of the Jewish ghettos who are not required are to be evacuated to the east.
5. As many male Jews as possible are to be taken to concentration camps in the oil-shale area. . . . The date set for the reorganization . . . is August 1, 1943.⁹

This order was part of the general policy for liquidating Jews, and the reference to workers means that the Germans wanted to continue exploiting the able-bodied for as long as possible. This order, which was issued several weeks after the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which broke out on April 19, 1943, and lasted for some weeks, was probably influenced by lessons learned by Himmler and the SS from this uprising: that conditions in a closed concentration camp, whose inmates are cut off from the outside world and where control over them is absolute, make the possibility of revolt extremely difficult.

It would appear that the deteriorating military situation and the lifting of the siege on Leningrad, which created a direct Soviet military threat in the entire Ostland region, were also instrumental in Himmler's decision to issue the order. The order was also aimed at supplying much needed manpower to the bitumen mines in Estonia and for building fortifications there.

For the Jews in Ostland who were still in the ghettos, this order spelled disaster. The concentration camps were meant only for people capable of working, and Himmler was clear about evacuating to the east all "inmates of the Jewish ghettos who are not required," in other words, children and old people. According to German statistics, the ghettos in Ostland still contained some 72,000 Jews, of whom 50,000 were to be sent to concentration camps and the remaining 22,000

were destined to be murdered.¹⁰ Extremely harsh conditions awaited those who were sent to work, beyond even the fact that they had lost their spouses, children, and elderly parents; from now on they would be forced to live under a daily concentration camp regime of hard labor and near starvation. The significance of the order to liquidate the ghettos also lay in the plan to transfer responsibility for the Jews from the civil administration, under whose auspices the ghettos had been in the past, to the SS, who had sole control of the concentration camps.

The civil administration was reluctant to give up the Jewish workers in Ostland by transferring them to the large concentration camps under the control of the WVHA, and it decided to establish small concentration camps, some of them within the ghetto area, the control of which, even if only partial, would remain in its hands. The ghettos and the cheap Jewish labor provided an important source of income to the civil administration, which gave its own interpretation to Clause 3 of Himmler's directive, which forbade the transfer of Jews from ghettos to concentration camps to disturb military production. And thus, according to a document issued by Reichkommissariat Ostland on July 31, 1943:

Workshops in which production cannot be continued in large camps will be concentrated in small concentration camps. Thus, for example, a small part of the former Riga ghetto will be turned into a concentration camp, in which workshops will carry out essential production on behalf of the military. . . . Management of the camp will be undertaken, in keeping with his demand, by the Generalkommissar of Riga. It is taken for granted that all security-police tasks will be filled by the Police. Income will be channeled into our budget, as previously, but there is no final decision on the matter.¹¹

This decision contradicted the essence and spirit of Himmler's order. The civil administration's budget was based on its local income, which is the reason for its attempts to hold onto its control of Jewish manpower. On August 10, 1943, Lohse issued an order to the Generalkommissars in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia which gave the impression that the civil administration was a partner in the liquidation of ghettos. Another document, which gives the impression that the civil administration considered itself a partner to this process was sent on August 18 by the Gebietskommissar of Riga to the Generalkommissar of Latvia, with details of the camps to which Jews were to be sent and a timetable for carrying out the transfer.¹² The Sipo responded angrily to this matter and appealed to their commanders in Berlin. The Sipo commander in Latvia sent a letter to the Generalkommissar in Latvia on September 15, 1943, in which he wrote:

Concentration of Jews is being carried out in accordance with orders from Reichsführer-SS. . . . Sole authority for carrying out the concentration lies

with the Sipo. . . . I have passed the August 18, 1943, letter to my superiors, together with the Reichskommissar's August 10, 1943, orders. My commander [Higher ss and Police Leader in Ostland] had asked the Reichskommissar for the August 10, 1943, order to the Generalkommissars to be withdrawn.¹³

Lohse gave in, and in a letter dated October 15 to the Generalkommissars, he wrote,

Re: My order dated August 10, 1943. Please see this order as being only informative. Sole authority for carrying out concentration [of Jews] is in the hands of the Sipo.¹⁴

The civil administration, however, was reluctant to lose its income from Jewish labor, even when these were concentrated in camps in Ostland. In a letter dated May 10, 1944, two months before the area was liberated by the Soviet army, to the head of WVHA, who was in charge of the concentration camps, Rosenberg demanded the profits from Jewish labor in concentration camps in Ostland.¹⁵ But the ss wanted these profits for themselves. Jewish labor was not only important to the war economy but also a source of income to the various German authorities.

MURDER ACTIONS IN THE GHETTOS AND LABOR CAMPS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LITHUANIA

The first of the actions in this stage of the extermination in Ostland took place on April 4, 1943, and consisted of the liquidation of the ghettos in Sviencionys, Oshmiana, Mikhalishki, and Soly in eastern areas of Generalkommissariat Lithuania. The background for this action was the escalated activity of Soviet partisans in the border regions between Belorussia and Lithuania and the claim that these ghetto Jews had contacts with them. The ghetto Jews were informed that they were being transferred to ghettos in Vilnius and Kaunas. In order to believe that no harm would befall them during this transfer, the operation itself was entrusted to the Vilnius ghetto Jewish police.

On March 3 and then on March 31, the Kaunas ghetto Jewish council was informed by the city's Gebietskommissariat that they were to prepare to accept 3,000 to 5,000 Jews into the ghetto.¹⁶ Jewish policemen from Vilnius arrived at the four ghettos to organize the transfer. It was they who decided that professionals and members of the Jewish council would be taken to Vilnius and all the others to Kaunas. Between March 26 and April 2, some 1,250 Jews were transferred to the Vilnius ghetto; 1,500 more were sent from Oshmiana to labor camps in the Vilnius region.¹⁷

On April 4, the Jews of Sviencionys were loaded onto a freight train at the Sviencioneliai station, and the Jews of Oshmiana, Mikhalishki, and Soly boarded the train at the station in Soly. The transfer of Jews from the ghettos to the railway stations and boarding them on the trains was supervised by Jewish police from the Vilnius ghetto; no Germans were present. The trains moved off in the evening in the direction of Vilnius on their way to Kaunas, accompanied by Jewish police. At dawn on April 5, when the train from Oshmiana arrived at Vilnius, it was joined by Jewish council chairman Jacob Gens. The train, instead of making its way to Kaunas, was taken to the Panerai station, where it was surrounded by German and Lithuanian police.

Gens and the Jewish police from Vilnius were arrested and taken to Vilnius. The Jews were removed from the carriages and shot. A similar fate awaited the people of Sviencionys. On arrival in Vilnius, several train carriages containing young people destined for the labor camp at Bezdonys were disconnected and sent on their way. The remaining passengers were taken to Panerai and shot.

Hundreds of people tried to escape when the train doors were opened, and some of them attacked German and Lithuanian police forces. Most of the escapees were killed in the station and in the surrounding fields; several dozen managed to get away and made it to the Vilnius ghetto. Some 4,000 Jews were murdered in this operation. At the end of the murder, Gens and the Jewish police were released from custody. The murder of these Jews became known as the “Kaunas train action.”¹⁸ The report on events in Lithuania during April 1943 sent by the Sipo commander in Lithuania to the RSHA in Berlin included the following clause:

4. Jews. In the month referred to in this report, the following regions of Belorussia annexed to Generalkommissariat Lithuania were cleansed of Jews: Sviencionys, Oshmiana, Svir, Eisiskes. . . . These areas, which are under constant threat from partisans, are now completely cleansed of Jews. The result of this is that we now have a border region of between 50 and 80 kilometers wide in which there are no Jews. The Jews living in the above mentioned regions were concentrated and sorted according to their ability to work. Those Jews who were found unable to work, about 4,000, were given special treatment in Panerai on April 5, 1943. . . . Unterscharführer Wille was attacked by a Jew who stabbed him . . . In the course of an attempted escape on the part of some 50 Jews, shots were fired on a Lithuanian police officer and the man was badly wounded.¹⁹

Thus, in order to prevent their mass escape, the Sipo misled Gens and the Jewish police, pretending that the ghetto Jews were being transferred to Vilnius and Kaunas. The fact that hundreds of Jews had indeed been transferred to Vilnius

a few days earlier also contributed to a sense of security. It is not clear whether the German authorities had planned to exterminate 4,000 Jews from the first or only a few days before the deportation. But the Sipo decided to murder them in Panerai in connection with partisan activity.²⁰ During the days preceding the murder action, groups of young Jews left the ghettos to join the partisans.²¹

Following the liquidation of the east Lithuanian ghettos, the region's labor camps were also liquidated. Some of the camps' workers were transferred to the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettos, and others were liquidated along with the camps.²² The murder of Jews in the Kaunas train and in labor camps was carried out by soldiers of the First Lithuanian Police Battalion under the command of Captain Juozas Truskauskas.²³

LIQUIDATING THE GHETTOS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LITHUANIA AND TRANSFORMING THEM INTO CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Liquidation of the Ostland ghettos according to Himmler's June 21, 1943, orders commenced in Generalkommissariat Lithuania, which had in Ostland the largest remaining concentration of Jews—some 40,000. In early summer 1943, the Jews were concentrated in three ghettos: Vilnius, Kaunas, and Siauliai. The first to be liquidated was the Vilnius ghetto, which housed between 18,000 and 19,000 Jews.

Groups of Jewish workers set out as usual on the morning of August 6, 1943, to their workplaces outside the ghetto. On arrival at the airport in Porobanek, about 1,000 workers were suddenly surrounded by Estonian policemen. The Jews started to escape through the barbed wire fences. Dozens of them were killed on the spot, many were wounded, and a few managed to escape and return to the ghetto, but most of the workers were taken to the railway station. About 1,000 Jews were caught and loaded onto a train, but before the train set off, Gens came and promised that the people were being taken to work in Estonia.

On his return to the ghetto, Gens told the gathering crowd that the people had been taken to Estonia. He explained that he had refused the Germans' demands for a quota of Jews for transfer to Estonia and Riga; therefore, the Germans had kidnapped the required number from among the workers outside the ghetto. He added that a few foreman of the work groups had gone to Estonia with their people and that some of them would return to report on the conditions under which they were being held. A foreman did indeed return a few days later with news that the people were being held in a labor camp in Vaivara; he brought letters from them. The news somewhat calmed the ghetto inmates.²⁴

In Vilnius the Sipo demanded a further 4,000 to 5,000 people for work in Estonia, and Gens was promised that no more kidnapping would occur in workplaces if the Jewish Council would supply the required number of people. The Germans suggested including families of workers destined for Estonia, and there were cases of women volunteering to join their husbands in Estonia. A second shipment of Jews left for Estonia on August 24, 1943, not with the required quota but with only 1,400 to 1,500 men, women, and children on board.

On September 1, 1943, the ghetto was surrounded by German, Lithuanian, and Estonian police forces. The Jewish council was ordered to prepare 3,000 men and 2,000 women for transfer to Estonia and Latvia. The ghetto's inhabitants went into hiding, and German police forces began searching for them. In the afternoon an exchange of fire took place in the ghetto between members of the Jewish underground and German police forces. Fearing an armed confrontation between the German forces and the ghetto's Jewish underground, which would result in the liquidation of the entire ghetto, Gens informed the Germans that he would supply the required number of Jews on the condition that they withdraw from the ghetto. The Germans agreed to his proposal. Between September 2 and 4, Gens and the ghetto's police succeeded by force and by persuasion to gather together some 5,000 men and women, and on September 5, they were sent to Estonia and Latvia.²⁵

Some 12,000 Jews remained in the ghetto. Within a fortnight, about 2,200 people were taken out of the ghetto. Workers and their families employed in the military vehicle workshop, in the military hospital, and in the Kailis fur factory (all serving the German army) were sent to camps in the vicinity of their workplaces. On September 14, Gens was summoned to the Sipo office. Despite a warning from a Lithuanian source that he was about to be executed, Gens decided to report. At the Sipo office, Gens was taken by Obersturmführer Rolf Neugbauer, Sipo commander in Vilnius, to the Rossa prison, where he was shot. The Germans accused Gens of assisting the Jewish underground in the ghetto.²⁶

The Vilnius ghetto, which still housed some 10,000 Jews, was liquidated on September 23 and 24. The ghetto leaders were ordered to assemble all the inhabitants, who were then informed on behalf of the Gebietskommissar that the ghetto was to be liquidated and they were to be transferred to Estonia and Latvia. They were told to report by noon to the ghetto gates with their belongings. About 2,000 Jews remained in hiding, and 8,000 were assembled at Rossa Square, where the men were separated from the women and children; between 1,600 and 2,000 men were then sent to Estonia. On the following day, 1,400 to 1,700 of the younger women, some of whom had been torn forcibly from their children, were sent to the Kaiserwald camp (known in Latvian as Mezapark), in a suburb of the Latvian city

of Riga. Between 4,000 and 4,500 women and children were sent to the Sobibor extermination camp in the General Government, and several old people were shot in Panerai. The Vilnius ghetto was liquidated. In the empty ghetto there remained only those people who had gone into hiding, but hundreds of these were subsequently caught by the German and Lithuanian security forces or were betrayed by locals searching for abandoned Jewish property.²⁷

During the second half of September 1943 the ghettos in Kaunas and Siauliai were handed over to the ss, who turned them into central concentration camps. These concentration camps had some subcamps close to workplaces. In the concentration camps in Kaunas and Siauliai the families were not split up. Shortly before being transformed into a concentration camp, the Kaunas ghetto had a Jewish population numbering around 16,000. The ghetto was placed under the command of the ss and Sturmbanführer Wilhelm Gecke. In October Germans and Ukrainians entered the ghetto and abducted 2,700 people who were destined for transfer to Estonia. The abducted, including entire families, were brought to the airport in Kaunas, where selection was carried out to separate the able-bodied from those incapable of work. According to one of the survivors:

My mother feared that they would take me and my sister, Lea'le, and dressed us in adult clothing — high heels and fur coats. My mother was unable to save my pretty little 8-year-old sister. The bastards pulled her out my mother's arms. . . . Lea'le screamed, "Mother, don't give me away!" When the German saw that he was not going to be able to pull them apart, he hit my mother on the head with his rifle butt, and she lost consciousness. We caught her and pushed her into the carriage. My sister Lea'le was taken with other children to her death. That night, my mother's hair turned as white as snow. She was 31 years old.²⁸

Between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews were removed from the central camp in Kaunas in late November and December 1943 and taken to subcamps in the region. Between 7,000 and 8,000 Jews remained in the Kaunas camp.²⁹

Some 4,500 Jews lived in the Siauliai ghetto on the eve of its conversion into a concentration camp. During the last week of September 1943 some 1,500 men and women were removed from the ghetto and transferred to small camps in the region. On November 5, after Jewish men and women left on their way to work, the ss together with Ukrainians and Lithuanian police entered the ghetto and removed 574 children, 191 old people, and a few dozen cripples and invalids from the ghetto and shot them. In the central camp there remained only 227 children whose parents had succeeded in hiding them.³⁰ Toward the end of 1943, some 19,000 Jews remained in the camps in Lithuania.

A large concentration camp was erected in the airport at Panevezys, to which Jews were brought from various countries, including about 3,000 from camps in Estonia and Latvia, who had been brought there in the spring of 1944.

According to Himmler's June 21, 1943, order, all the ghettos were to be treated in an identical way. What then were the reasons for liquidating the ghetto in Vilnius and the murder of part of its inhabitants, while in the Kaunas and Siauliai ghettos most of the Jews were allowed to remain? Explanations for this can be found in German reports. The report by the Sipo commander in Lithuania dated September 1, 1943, stated: "In order to avoid panic among the Jews, which might provoke resistance and mass escape, it has been agreed with the WVHA that first of all the Jews must be removed from Vilnius. . . . Several hundred Vilnius Jews tried to escape. Some of them were shot along with their families."³¹

The Sipo was aware of the existence of a Jewish underground in the Vilnius ghetto and its potential for resistance, so that, in order to take advantage of the surprise element and to catch the Vilnius ghetto's Jews unawares, it was decided to give priority to "removing the Jews from Vilnius." According to the Sipo commander's report dated October 1, 1943, which dealt with the September events, "Due to known difficulties, the Vilnius ghetto was evacuated of all its inhabitants. On several occasions it was necessary to use force in breaking the serious opposition of the Jews. We suffered losses during the last action."³² The reason for the complete liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto included the reference to "known difficulties," the meaning being the underground and the escape of young people to the forests.

On March 27 the Sipo arrested all 130 members of the Kaunas camp Jewish police and took them to Ninth Fort, where they were ordered to reveal the places in which Jews were hiding as the actions took place. Moshe Levin, commander of the Jewish police, and other police officers were tortured severely in their interrogation and were accused of helping people to escape and join the partisans. The officers refused to reveal the hiding places, and they were shot. Except for a few who broke down under torture and cooperated with the Sipo, all the others refused to provide information. About 40 Jewish policemen were shot. The remaining policemen were held for a few days longer at Ninth Fort before being returned to the camp.³³

On March 27, an action took place in Kaunas central camp against children. Some 1,000 children and a few old people were removed from the camp and transported to Auschwitz. The following day, the action continued, with the removal from the camp of about 300 Jews, mostly children, who had been found in hiding places. These were taken to Ninth Fort and shot. The ghetto inhabitants managed to hide about 200 children. Similar actions took place against children

at the same time in other camps in the Kaunas region; about 500 children were murdered.³⁴

A murder action took place against children on March 27, 1944, in the camps in Vilnius. Mothers were ordered to bring their children to the clinic under the pretext of inoculating them against typhus. At the clinic, the children were snatched from their arms. Around 200 children were removed at that time from camps in the Vilnius area, and these were taken to Kaunas to join the transfer of children to Auschwitz. Several dozen children continued to be held in hiding places for months.³⁵ About 2,000 people were led to their deaths during the late March murder actions. Most were children and a few old people.

LIQUIDATING THE GHETTOS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LATVIA

Between 12,000 and 13,000 remained in Generalkommissariat Latvia in early summer 1943. About 5,000 to 5,500 were local Jews concentrated in three ghettos: Riga, Daugavpils, and Liepaja, and the remaining 7,000 to 7,500 were Reich Jews.³⁶

The concentration Kaiserwald camp was the largest camp in Latvia and served as a transit camp for Jews being transferred to other camps. In the process of liquidating the ghettos in Latvia, which began in late July and continued until late October 1943, Jews were transferred from ghettos to the Kaiserwald camp. Some of them remained there, while others were sent to other camps in Latvia, which were administratively subordinate to it. Obersturmführer ss Sauer was the camp's commander, and indicted German criminals served as Kapos, who behaved ruthlessly toward the Jews.³⁷

Other concentration camps in Latvia in which large groups of Jews were employed were the Sipo camp near Riga, with 1,000 Jews; in Strasdenhof, with 3,000 employed in various enterprises in Riga; and the Armeebekleidungsamt camp, in which 2,000 were employed in sewing army uniforms and clothing. Seelager Dandogen was a large concentration camp near the sea in northwest Kurlandia; several thousand Jews were held there. Between several dozen and several hundred Jews were held in each of thirteen small camps.³⁸ The regime in Kaiserwald and other camps did not differ from that in similar concentration camps in Germany: total separation of men and women; striped uniforms; personal numbers instead of names; "appels" (muster) before setting off for work and on returning from work; standing in food lines; strict discipline and harsh punishment.

One of the worst camps, in which the commander was especially cruel to the Jews, was the one at Dandogen, where the mortality rate was exceptionally

high. A Jew from Riga—Sheinikson—was caught trying to obtain food for his young son from farmers in the vicinity of his workplace. The camp inmates were forced to stand in rows and watch as Sheinikson was tied to a fencepost and given thirty whip lashes. The camp commander, Kroschl, then poured several buckets of freezing water on the man, who was bleeding from his wounds and barely conscious. When the other prisoners were herded back to their huts, Sheinikson remained tied to the fencepost. According to an eyewitness: “The following morning, before leaving for work, we saw Sheinikson again. He was still tied to the post, but now what we saw was a block of ice, something of a godlike statue, as if produced by an artist. . . . It was a father who went to seek a slice of bread for his hungry son.”³⁹

By August 21, 1943, the number of Jews transferred from Riga to Kaiserwald and concentration camps annexed to it reached 7,874. In the Riga ghetto, there remained only children under 10, old people, and the chronically sick—mainly Jews from the Reich. Some 2,000 of the ghetto inhabitants, together with people who had been returned from Kaiserwald because they were no longer fit for work, were deported to Auschwitz on November 2.⁴⁰

By mid-1943, some 800 Jews remained in Liepaja, and on October 8 these were transferred to Kaiserwald. Some 400 Jews remained in Daugavpils; during the last week of October, they were transferred to Kaiserwald. In Liepaja and Daugavpils there remained only a handful of artisans who were held there until spring 1944, when they, too, were transferred to Kaiserwald.⁴¹ In late September 1943 a transport arrived in Kaiserwald with between 1,400 and 1,700 women from Vilnius; they were registered and sent straight to various camps.⁴²

In May and June 1944, several months before the Soviet army liberated the region, several transports of Jewish women from Hungary (from the regions of Transcarpathian Ukraine and north Transylvania) were brought to camps in Latvia. At least 3,000 women came on these transports, all of them young.⁴³ These women had passed the selection in Auschwitz and were sent to camps in Latvia in accordance with WVHA instructions.⁴⁴ In the various camps in which they were dispersed, the women met the Latvian and German Jews who also worked there.⁴⁵ Some of the women perished in Latvia, and some were subsequently transferred to Stutthof in east Prussia, near the city of Danzig (Gdansk).⁴⁶

GENERALKOMMISSARIAT ESTONIA

During September and October 1942 several consignments of Reich Jews had been sent to Estonia and murdered in Kalevi-Liiva. Of the transport that arrived from Theresienstadt in early September, some 150 women and a

few dozen men had been removed and sent to the Iagala camp near the site of the murders; the women were employed in sorting out the victims' property. Most of them either died or were murdered, and only a few survived to join the deportees who arrived in Estonia during the liquidation of the Ostland ghettos during the second half of 1943.⁴⁷

The need for working hands resulted in some 12,000 Jews being brought to Estonia in September and October 1943. Most of them were from the Vilnius ghetto. In late December 1943 and early January 1944 several hundred Jews were brought there from the camps in Latvia.⁴⁸ The main concentration camp in Estonia was in Vaivara and went into operation in early August 1943; all the other camps were annexed to it. Vaivara was commanded by Obersturmführer SS Hans Aumeier. Jews brought to Estonia usually passed through Vaivara before being sent on to other camps. On his first meeting with the camps in Estonia, one of the deportees, who had left Vilnius on September 24, 1943, wrote:

We arrived in Estonia on Monday. At dawn it became clear that we were in Vaivara. . . . We went on until we arrived in Klooga. . . . The camp commander said to us, "You must hand over everything you brought with you. Money, watches and other valuables, all the parcels. . . . Noncompliance means that your fate will be the same as his," and with his boot he pointed to a corpse laying on the ground behind him. . . . In our camp there were 1,200 women and 800 men.⁴⁹

The large camps in Estonia were Klooga, Lagedi, Ereda, Auvara, Goldfilz, Narva, Kureme, Kivioli, and Soski.⁵⁰ The regime in the Estonian camps was similar to that in the camps in Latvia. Prisoners worked mainly outside of the camps, and supervision was usually in the hands of the Todt organization, which was responsible for building and infrastructure works. The jobs for which the Jews were sent to Estonia were connected directly with the war effort, near the front line of Leningrad, where the Germans were anticipating a Soviet attack. These included peat mining, lumberjacking, digging antitank trenches, building roads, and working in sawmills and cement factories.

These works were carried out under conditions of extreme cold and hunger, which resulted in outbreaks of typhoid fever and dysentery. The death toll among the prisoners was high. Selections were carried out in the camp, and people who, due to exhaustion and sickness, were no longer fit for work were shot. When it became clear to the camp authorities that the high mortality rate among the prisoners might result in the complete extermination of the Jewish workforce, a hospital was established in the main camp at Vaivara, to which patients were brought in from other camps. The dead in the camps were not buried but cremated.⁵¹

Selection was carried out in the Estonian camps on children who had arrived there by various ways. The second transport to leave Vilnius on August 24, 1943, which included the families of deportees from the first transport on August 6, also included children. Some of the children had been hidden in parcels by their parents and brought with them clandestinely. Selections took place in many of the camps in February and March 1944, and all those considered unfit for work, including children, were concentrated in the Ereda camp. On February 13, a selection took place in Ereda, after which some 800 Jews, including hundreds of children, were loaded onto a freight train and taken for extermination, probably to Auschwitz.⁵²

EXTERMINATION OF THE LAST JEWS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT BELORUSSIA

By early 1943, after the large wave of exterminations in Generalkommissariat Belorussia during the spring and autumn of 1942, there remained in the ghettos and camps between 21,000 and 23,000 Jews. The ghetto in Slutsk, where an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Jews remained, was liquidated on February 8, 1943. The Sipo commander in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, Eduard Strauch, entrusted his men in the Minsk HQ with the task of liquidating the Slutsk ghetto.⁵³ The murders were carried out near Mekhorta, in the vicinity of Slutsk. Strauch could have given the job of murdering the Jews to the Latvian unit that was also involved in this operation, but it seems that, this time, he wished to involve all his men personally, so that they could all be partners to the crime.

On April 8 Generalkommissar Kube called a conference in Minsk with the participation of Gebietskommissars and ss and Police commanders in Belorussia. Among the issues discussed were those relating to the partisan movement, the Jewish issue, and the connection between the Jews and the partisans. Kube opened the conference by reviewing the political situation in Belorussia: "Those who carry the partisan movement . . . are mainly Russians who have migrated here and Jews. Last summer, when we undertook to solve the Jewish problem and began resettling them, the partisan movement was immediately weakened. Some of the Jews got away, escaped to the forests and reinforced the partisan movement." ss-Brigadeführer Kurt von Gottberg, commander of the ss and Police in Belorussia and responsible for the antipartisan war there, reported on "enemy losses" numbering 11,000 Jews and 233 prisoners. The murdered Jews in the ghettos were identified as partisans, which justified their liquidation.⁵⁴

Some 700 Jews remained in Baranovichi after the September 1942 massacre. In January 1943 around 200 of the camps' workers were murdered in the vicin-

ity of the town. The remaining camp inmates were taken on October 27, 1943, to the concentration camp at Koldichevo.⁵⁵ The Koldichevo camp was established in early summer 1942 about 18 kilometers from Baranovichi on the way to Novogrudok and placed under the command of the Sipo; during its existence, several thousand Jews were murdered there. About 100 Jews remained in the camp and, on the night of March 17, 1944, they escaped. A quarter of them were caught and shot; the remainder managed to join the partisans.⁵⁶

About 1,200 Jews remained in Novogrudok after the August 1942 massacre. On February 4, 1943, the Pershika ghetto—one of two in Novogrudok—was surrounded and all 500 of its inhabitants were led to pits near the village of Litovka, some 3 kilometers out of town, where they were shot. About 600 Jews remained in the camp in Novogrudok. On May 7, 1943, over 300 of them were taken out of town on the way to the township of Korelichi, where they were shot.⁵⁷ The almost 250 Jews remaining in the camp dug an underground tunnel and escaped on the night of September 26, 1943.⁵⁸

About 3,500 Jews—including those who had been brought in from neighboring townships—remained in the ghetto in Lida after the May 8, 1942, massacre. Some 300 escaped the ghetto to the forests. At 6:00 a.m. on September 18, 1943, the ghetto was surrounded and its inhabitants were transferred to the Sobibor extermination camp to be gassed. At the Sobibor trial, German engineer Otto Weisbecker, a work supervisor in the Todt organization, testified on the transfer of Jews from Lida to Sobibor:

One day, all the ghetto Jews—men, women, and children—were loaded on freight carriages . . . for transport to the Sobibor camp. The following day I received an order from the head of my department, architect Hans W., to transfer our Jews to Lublin in order to carry out some work there. That same day, the Jews were loaded onto the train, 60 people to a carriage. I was appointed commander of the transport and a police sergeant and 19 Polish policemen were subordinated to me. . . . Notwithstanding the security precautions, 20–25 Jews escaped on the way. . . . The following morning I came to the camp [Sobibor] and was ordered to report to the camp commander. . . . A large map of the camp hung on the wall of the hut. When I looked at the map, I realized that there was no chance of the existing huts accommodating all 1,400 Jews who had been brought in the day before. To my question as to where the Jews I had brought could be accommodated, the camp commander replied that of the 1,400 Jews from the previous day's transport, not one remained.⁵⁹

The Germans used Todt members to transfer Lida Jews in order to deceive them into believing that their destination was not the Sobibor extermination

camp and to make them believe that they were being taken to work for the Todt organization.

Some 2,200 Jews remained in the Glubokoie ghetto in the aftermath of the June 1942 massacre. From this ghetto, as from others in Belorussia, many youngsters escaped to the forests to join the partisans and an armed underground was active in the ghetto itself. In mid-August 1943 the Sipo informed the Jewish council that the ghetto was about to be liquidated and all its inhabitants were to be transferred to concentration camps in the General Government. The Jews refused to comply with the order to evacuate, and on August 20, German soldiers and local police forces entered the ghetto. The Jewish underground opened fire, the ghetto went up in flames, and a mass escape ensued. Above 200 people managed to escape and join the partisans; the remaining Jews were killed inside the ghetto or were taken out of town and shot.⁶⁰

Ghetto Minsk, the largest in Belorussia, had a population of between 7,000 and 9,000 by early 1943. Following the major massacre of July 1942, this number was reduced by smaller-scale murder actions, disease, and starvation, and people escaped to the forests to join the partisans. The Jewish council was dispersed and replaced by a German-appointed management, headed by Epstein, a refugee from Poland who, unlike the previous Jewish council, cooperated with the Germans.⁶¹ Between January 1943 and October 1943, when the ghetto was liquidated, acts of murder were committed against individuals, and collective punishment was administered to groups of Jews suspected of subversive activity. Those months saw the gradual decline of the ghetto.⁶²

Generalkommissar Kube did not object to these acts. But when, on July 20, 1943, the Sipo arrested artisans and other workers employed in services to the administration and he himself was affected, Kube summoned Strauch, the Sipo commander in Generalkommissariat Belorussia. Strauch wrote to his superiors on the day of his meeting with Kube:

Following orders, I arrested, on Tuesday, July 20, 1943, at 7:00 a.m., 70 Jews employed by the Generalkommissar of Belorussia and passed them on for "special treatment" [*Sonderbehandlung*]. That same day, at 10:00, I received a call from the Generalkommissariat that the Gauleiter Kube wanted to speak to me immediately. . . . He asked me what caused me to arrest the Jews employed by him. I explained that I had received explicit orders to carry out this action. He demanded to see the order in writing. As far as I was concerned, a verbal order is just as binding as a written one. . . . The Gauleiter Kube declared that this was a serious breach of his authority, that the Jewish workforce was subversive to him, and that it was unacceptable for Reichsführer SS or, in this case, Obergruppenführer von dem Bach to interfere in his Generalkommissariat.

. . . He was obliged to see in this a personal attack on himself, so long as the Jews are banished only from his employ and not from Wehrmacht or other authorities. . . . Of course he is not able to arm his men in order to prevent their Jews' arrest, and he is obliged to give in. But he leaves no doubt that in future he will reject all cooperation with the police, and especially with the Sipo. . . . I stressed that I did not understand how German people could fall out on account of a few Jews. I can continue to stress yet again that my people and I are accused of barbarism and sadism, whereas I am only fulfilling my duty. Even the extraction of gold teeth from the mouths of Jews destined for special treatment became an issue for discussion. Kube reiterated that this kind of behavior is unbecoming to a German person and to the Germany of Kant and Goethe. When the good name of Germany is harmed all over the world, it will be our fault. Apart from this, he said, it is true that my men are satisfying their own desires with these executions. I objected strongly to this statement and stressed that it is unfortunate that in addition to the revolting task we are obliged to carry out, we are also subject to muckraking [*diese üble Arbeit hinaus noch mit Schmutz ubergossen wurden*]. Thus ended the conversation.⁶³

Kube became aware of the tooth extractions from a letter he received on May 31, 1943, from the Minsk prison governor, Gunther, who informed him that the Sipo had arrested the Jewish dentist Ernst Israel Tichauer and his wife and brought them to the prison. During the massacres of April 14 and 27, 1943, according to the letter, this dentist had extracted gold teeth from the mouths of 164 Jews by breaking them off (*ausgebrochen*). The letter also pointed out that 50 percent of all Jews have gold teeth, gold bridgework, or gold fillings and that Sipo Hauptscharführer Adolf Rube was present at the extractions and he took the gold away with him.⁶⁴ The practice in the extermination camps was to extract gold teeth after the Jews had been put to death in the gas chambers and prior to cremating the corpses. Extracting teeth from the mouths of living people was, by all accounts, an unusual occurrence during the Holocaust and was probably carried out in this case on the initiative of the Sipo in Minsk.

Fierce disagreements emerged between Kube and the ss in Generalkommissariat Belorussia. Kube was convinced that in order to limit the activity of partisan movements and to advance German interests, it would be wise to seek the cooperation of larger numbers of local nationalist elements and to give them more authority on issues of culture, economics, and youth movements. For the ss, the only solution could be provided by power and terror, and these consisted of arrests, mass murder of hostages, and razing entire villages to the ground.⁶⁵ When it came to the extermination of Jews, however, there was no dispute between

Kube and the ss. But in order to weaken Kube's position, the ss did not miss an opportunity to accuse him of undermining their anti-Jewish policies.

Kube was killed on September 22, 1943, by a bomb placed in his bed by a Belorussian chambermaid employed by him and working for the Soviet partisans. He was replaced by Brigadführer-ss Kurt von Gottberg, who served as the Higher ss and Police Leader of Russia Center and Belorussia. This appointment reinforced the status of the ss vis-à-vis the civil administration.⁶⁶

The final liquidation of the Minsk ghetto began in September 1943. At the beginning of the month, the physically fit inhabitants of the ghetto and of labor camps attached to workplaces were removed and rehoused in a camp on Shiroka Street in Minsk. The camp also accommodated some Jews who had been brought to Minsk from Germany. On September 10 some 2,000 men were sent by train to Lublin in the General Government, where about 500 who declared that they belonged to various professions were chosen to be sent to the concentration camp in Budzyn.⁶⁷ The others were apparently sent to the Sobibor extermination camp and murdered. A further transport left the Shiroka camp on September 18 on its way to Sobibor. According to Alexander Pecherski, a Soviet army officer and one of a group of Jewish war prisoners held at the camp and included in the transport:

On September 23, in the morning, a locomotive pushed the train into the camp. . . . Oberscharführer Gomerski shouted: "Cabinmakers and carpenters without families, forward." Eighty men, most of them war prisoners, reported. We were rushed into a fenced area. . . . A Jew who returned from some work approached us. During the conversation I noticed gray smoke rising in the northwest direction and the sharp smell of burning hovering in the air. I asked: "What is burning there?" "They are burning the bodies of your friends who arrived with you," the Jew answered. I was shocked.⁶⁸

The Jews of Minsk knew nothing of the existence of extermination camps and believed that they were being taken to labor camps. The final action in which the Minsk ghetto was liquidated began on October 21, 1943, and continued for ten or twelve days; many of the Jews had gone into hiding, and German forces were obliged to conduct a house-to-house search of the ghetto. On the eve of this final action, the ghetto's Jewish population numbered between 2,000 and 3,000. This time the Jews were taken to Malyi-Trostinets, where they were murdered. The camp at Sobibor was unable at that time to accept new transports, because the Jewish prisoners' uprising on October 14 resulted in a halt in the camp's activity.⁶⁹

Notwithstanding the ghetto guards and the constant house searches, dozens

and perhaps hundreds of Jews managed to hide away and escape to the forests during and after the massacre. Some Jews even managed to remain in hiding until the city was liberated on July 3, 1944.⁷⁰ After the October 1943 action, the Germans left about 500 Jewish artisans in Minsk, and 80–100 of these were transferred to the Sipo unit in charge of burning bodies in the Trostinets region. The last remaining Jews in Minsk were shot to death several weeks before liberation.⁷¹

Unlike in other parts of Ostland, in Generalkommissariat Belorussia there was no liquidation of ghettos and establishing of concentration camps, according to Himmler's June 21, 1943, order. The German administration in Belorussia preferred to exterminate Jews rather than to keep them, or even some of them, as part of the workforce. In Belorussia, unlike other parts of Ostland, the partisans waged an ever-increasing war against the Germans; moreover, several thousand Jews fought with these partisans, and Jews continued to escape from ghettos and labor camps to join them. In this case, security considerations took precedence over those of exploiting Jewish labor. There was a consensus among the three bodies that made up the German presence in Belorussia—the civil administration, the SS, and the German army—and with not one of them interested in maintaining Jewish manpower, the fate of the last Jews was sealed. By November 1943 all the ghettos and labor camps in Belorussia were liquidated, including their inmates.

EVACUATION AND MURDER OF THE LAST JEWS IN THE BALTIC STATES, JULY TO OCTOBER 1944

On June 22, 1944, the Soviet army broke through the German defense lines of Army Group Center, conquered most of Belorussia, and advanced swiftly toward Lithuania. The Germans began a panic-stricken withdrawal. News of the German defeat and withdrawal raised the hopes of the Jews in the camps that an end to their suffering was near, that the Soviet army's advance would prevent the Germans from murdering or evacuating them, and that the Soviet army would liberate them. But their hopes were dashed. The Germans managed to murder the last of the Jews—in some places only days before the arrival of the Soviet army. Lithuania was the first of the Baltic states to which the Soviet army arrived.

The first to be exterminated in Lithuania were the Jews in the camps in Vilnius. On July 2 and 3, with the occupation of Minsk, 200 kilometers away, 2,000 Jews were removed from the Kailis, the military vehicle workshop, and the military hospital camps, taken to Panerai, and murdered. Hundreds of people hid in their camps, but many were killed when SS soldiers searched the place and threw hand grenades into hiding places. Vilnius was liberated on July 13, ten days

after the last of the city's Jews were murdered. Between 150 and 200 survived by escaping or hiding.⁷²

Kaunas and the nearby camps still had a Jewish population of between 7,000 and 8,000 on the eve of the arrival of Soviet troops in the region. The man responsible for the camps in which Jews were held was one *Sturmabführer* Wilhelm Gecke. In early July 1944 he summoned the chairman of the Jewish council, Dr. Elkes, and informed him that the Germans were about to liquidate the camps and that its inhabitants would be sent to work in east Prussia. In a dramatic conversation, Dr. Elkes told Gecke that transfer of the ghetto Jews to Germany meant certain death and, in an emotional and courageous appeal, he said: "By removing the last remaining Jews from the ghetto [and sending them] to Germany, you will not be saving your fatherland. . . . You have the ability to save us by not carrying out the order to evacuate the ghetto. . . . I suggest that you stay with us and we undertake full responsibility to ensure that no harm will befall you." Gecke jumped up and shouted furiously, "I am an SS officer, and I don't do things like that." With this, the conversation came to an end.⁷³

When, on July 8, the Soviet army reached the outskirts of Vilnius (about 100 kilometers from Kaunas), hundreds of Jews were loaded onto ferries on the river Nieman (Nemunas) and taken to Tilsit in east Prussia. The main camp (ghetto) was evacuated between July 10 and 12 and the Jews were taken to the railway station. After counting them, the Germans decided that about 4,000 Jews (half the original number) were missing. The SS blew up houses and threw hand grenades into cellars in order to force Jews out or to kill them. About 1,500 Jews perished in this way. From Kaunas between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews were transferred to east Prussia and to Stutthof, where some were put to death and others were deported to various camps in Germany. Kaunas was liberated on August 1, 1944; a few days later 265 Jews emerged, some who had hidden in the area of the main camp and others who had escaped and hidden in the city and its vicinity.⁷⁴

Some 2,000 Jews remained in the main camp in Siauliai, and between July 11 and 14, more than 1,500 Jews were returned from neighboring camps and 3,000 Jews from the camp at Panevezys. During those days, Soviet planes bombed Siauliai and dozens of Jews were killed. All the Jews of Siauliai were brought to Stutthof to face a fate similar to that of the Jews of Kaunas. On July 27, 1943, five days after the departure of the last transport, Siauliai was liberated.⁷⁵

In mid-September 1944 the Soviets began an offensive to capture Latvia. According to estimates, the number of Jews in Latvia was between 7,500 and 8,500; this does not include the Hungarian Jewish women who were brought from Auschwitz.

Prior to the evacuation of Jews from the Latvian camps in early August, all

the Jews from camps in the vicinity of Riga were concentrated in the Kaiserwald camp. Evacuation from Latvia was carried out by sea, either from the port at Riga or from Liepaja. The first ship to set off with a cargo of Jewish prisoners was the *Bremerhaven*, which left Riga on August 6, 1944. According to Gertrude Schneider, who was on this ship, “We were almost 2,000 people [prisoners]—1,100 men and 900 women. There were also more than 3,000 Jewish women from Hungary. . . . Also, more than 3,000 Russian prisoners of war were on the ship.”⁷⁶ The *Bremenhaven* arrived in Danzig (Gdansk) on August 8, and the Jewish prisoners were transferred from there to Stutthof. Further transports set off by sea on September 25 and 29, and the last transport set off in early October.

By the time the Soviet army liberated Riga and Kaiserwald in mid-October 1944, there were no longer any Jews there. In some of the camps hundreds and perhaps even thousands of prisoners were murdered in August and September, before the Germans withdrew from the region.⁷⁷ In western Latvia, which included the port of Liepaja, the Germans erected a defense line which they held until the last day of the war. This region included the Seelager Dandogen camp, which was still inhabited by several thousand Jews, who were marched to Liepaja. From Liepaja, most of the prisoners were transferred to Stutthof; some of them apparently were murdered on the spot.⁷⁸ According to one testimony, one of the boats hit a mine and all the Jews on board, including women from Hungary, drowned in the Baltic Sea.⁷⁹

Two-thirds of the Jews who were in Latvia that summer were evacuated to Stutthof and other camps in Germany. Most of them died in these camps and on the “death marches.”⁸⁰ The number of Jews who survived in Latvia did not exceed 200.⁸¹

During January and February 1944 the Soviet army arrived at the Estonian border and stopped there to redeploy for attack. The evacuation of between 8,000 and 9,000 Jews from Estonian camps began in April.⁸² The Jews were evacuated from the camps Lagedi and Kivioli and others and sent over the Baltic Sea to the concentration camp at Stutthof.⁸³ The liberation of Estonia began on July 23, 1944, with the conquest of Narva in the country’s northeast. At the end of July, massacres were carried out in all the camps in Estonia; all prisoners who appeared incapable of work were murdered. In mid-August some 2,500 Jews who had previously been concentrated in Lagedi were brought to Tallinn, loaded onto a ship, and sent to Stutthof.⁸⁴ An estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Jews were evacuated from Estonia.

On September 14, 1944, the Soviet army broke through the German defense lines in Estonia and advanced toward Tallinn. On that date, there were 500 Jews in the Lagedi camp who had been brought there some weeks previously from the

Klooga camp; in Klooga there remained about 2,500 Jews. In Lagedi, the prisoners were loaded onto trucks in groups of 40, driven to a clearing in the forest, and shot.⁸⁵ At 4 a.m. on September 19, the Klooga camp was surrounded by German and Estonian ss troops. The Jews were ordered to assemble for inspection. Three hundred were picked and told that they were being taken to work in the nearby forest. M. Balberiszsky, who was there, wrote:

It was already afternoon, and the workers were not returning. . . . Suddenly there was the sound of automatic rifle fire. . . . Every fifteen minutes, Germans came and took away 25 to 50 people and immediately afterwards there was the sound of rifle fire. Twilight. The courtyard gradually emptied. At a certain moment, a group of people got away, I was among them, to a nearby building, and hid under the beds. . . . We're lying there, listening and waiting. Will the murderers enter? . . . Suddenly the dark hall is lit up by a sea of lights. Tongues of fire rise to the skies. . . . What's happening? What is the meaning of the flames? Suddenly there is quiet, silence, only fire and sparks. . . . Children, women, and men are burned in the fire . . . and when day breaks once again we no longer see any Germans.⁸⁶

The 300 people who were first to be removed were taken to a nearby forest, where they were ordered to carry wooden boards with which to form four 6 x 6 meter square wood platforms. When their work was completed, the Jews were all ordered to lie face down on the platforms and were shot in the back of the head. Further wooden boards were laid over the bodies of the first group, and more groups of Jews were brought from the camp to be shot to death in the same way. In laying wooden boards over the murdered Jewish corpses, the Germans were aided by Estonian prisoners.⁸⁷ As these murders were being carried out, other groups of Jews were forced to enter a large wooden hut in the camp, ordered to lie down on the corpses of Jews who had been murdered beforehand, and then shot. By evening, the wooden platforms and hut were packed with the corpses of about 2,500 Jewish victims of that day's shootings. As darkness fell, the Germans poured gasoline on the corpses in the wooden hut and over the layers of wooden boards and set them alight.

Their work completed, the Germans left Klooga that same night, without waiting for the fires to subside. Beforehand, they managed to murder a few more Jews found hiding in the camp. Five days after the departure of the Germans, on September 25, the Soviet army entered Klooga. About 85 survivors emerged from their hiding places within the camp; within a few days this number had grown to about 100, when they were joined by people who had escaped from the camp. Not all the piles of corpses had been burned and the Soviet soldiers came

across several wooden platforms with the bodies of murdered Jews. The sights were photographed for posterity. The murdered Jewish prisoners in the Klooga and Lagedi camps were the last ones in the Estonian camps. Within a few weeks, the few survivors returned to Lithuania, mainly to Vilnius.⁸⁸

Of the 31,000 to 34,000 Jewish prisoners still held in concentration camps in July 1944 in the three Baltic states, between 20,000 and 23,000 were evacuated to the concentration camps in the Reich; the remainder were murdered on the eve of the liberation. The retreating German administration did not leave behind a single living Jew. The few Jews who did survive did so because they had gone into hiding or escaped. To the very last moment, the German administration did everything in its power to seek out these Jews and murder them, too. Apart from these few hundred survivors, there were hundreds more from Lithuania who managed to survive by escaping to the forests and joining the partisans.

The evacuation of about two-thirds of the camps' Jews to the Reich, rather than murdering them on the spot, was not carried out by the German administration out of humanitarian considerations. The German war effort was in need of as much manpower as it could get. Most of the evacuated Jews were eventually murdered or died "naturally" on the job or on the "death marches" in Germany.

24

Liquidation of the Last Ghettos in Reichskommissariat Ukraine

CHANGING SITUATIONS

By the end of 1942 there still remained in the ghettos and labor camps of District Galicia between 140,000 and 150,000 Jews, after the large wave of deportations to the Belzec extermination camp. Most of them were murdered in the summer of 1943. In various places throughout the District small groups (totaling a few thousand) of skilled Jewish workers remained after this period. The extermination of the last of these workers took place as the Soviet army approached the region.

The Belzec extermination camp, which until then had taken in the Jews of District Galicia, ceased its activity in late 1942. A shortage of transport trains prevented the SS deportation authorities from sending the Jews to the more distant extermination camps of Sobibor and Treblinka, which were still operating. From early 1943, all murders of the Jews remaining in District Galicia were committed close to the towns and camps in which they were being held, and killing was accomplished by shooting. The shortage of trains for deportation of Jews was caused by the urgent need of the Army Group South, which in order to stabilize the front after the defeat at Stalingrad, needed the trains and railways that passed through District Galicia for fresh troops and more supply.

In the forests of west Ukraine—mainly in Volhynia—the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrainska Povstanska Armia, or UPA) started to operate. The UPA was the military arm of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization (Orhanizatsiia Ukrainiskyykh Natsionalistiv, or OUN), whose objective it was to establish an independent Ukrainian state. The OUN saw in the Soviet Union the greatest enemy of its national ambitions. In March 1943 around 6,000 members of the Ukrainian police in the service of the Germans escaped with their weapons and joined the UPA in the forests. Volhynia was the center of UPA power, and their units controlled large areas, including villages. One of its aims was to remove the

Polish population from west Ukraine, even by expulsion and force. As a result of this policy, especially in the rural areas of Volhynia, an Ukrainian-Polish war took place in 1943. At its peak the UPA had tens of thousands of fighters, and they enjoyed the support of much of the local Ukrainian population.”¹

The UPA adopted an extreme anti-Jewish stance. They defined the Jews of the Soviet Union as the most reliable element of support for the Bolshevik regime and the spearhead for Muscovite imperialism in the Ukraine.” The UPA murdered many Jews who had taken shelter in the forests and villages. The Poles, too, were seen by the UPA as enemies, and thousands of them were murdered.²

In its early days, UPA confronted the Germans, but with the approach of the Soviet army and on the eve of the German retreat, UPA signed a treaty with the Germans, who supplied them with arms to continue the struggle in the Soviet hinterland. Several hundred Jewish skilled workers, physicians, nurses, tailors, and cobblers hiding in the forests where UPA units operated were temporarily left alive by the UPA units, who needed their services. Most of these were murdered by the UPA before liberation of the area by the Soviet army.³

LIQUIDATION OF THE GHETTOS

In February 1943 the labor camp (Julag) in Lvov still accommodated above 25,000 Jews. According to official German statistics, in early March the number of Jews there was 15,344. This number included only Jews who were “legal.” The number of “illegals” in the labor camp at that time stood at around 10,000. On March 16, 1943, a Jewish employee of the SS and Police motor workshop in Lvov killed SS Corporal Keil. The following day, 12 Jewish policemen from the labor camp were hanged in retaliation and 1,500 Jews were shot.⁴ The Jews were thus duly warned of the punishment they could expect for harming a German.

The gradual liquidation of the Lvov labor camp began in May 1943. All the “unessential” Jews were taken to the murder site at Piaski and shot. From May 26, workers were dismissed from army workshops and other institutions. These workers were not returned to the labor camp but were taken straight to the camp at Janovska, which also became a transit camp for Jews on their way to extermination. Around 6,000 Jews were murdered in Janovska during the second half of May 1943. On June 1, 1943, German and Ukrainian police forces surrounded the labor camp, in which around 20,000 Jews still lived, about 12,000 of whom were “legal,” and began liquidating it. The action was commanded by Katzmann himself and was carried out by a company belonging to the Orpo Twenty-third Regiment together with German and Ukrainian police forces. As they entered

the camp, the Germans and Ukrainians encountered armed resistance on the part of the Jewish inmates and, in a battle that lasted several hours, they suffered casualties. It took about two weeks to liquidate the camp, but searches of the area continued until the end of July; from time to time these revealed Jews in hiding. About 7,000 Jews were taken to Janovska, and some 3,000 corpses were later found among the camp's ruins. The remaining inhabitants of the camp, with the exception of those who had found shelter on the Aryan side or in the town's sewers, were taken to Piaski and shot. In this action, 9 German policemen were killed and 17 were wounded.⁵ In his report on the liquidation of the Jewish labor camp, Katzmann wrote:

Owing to increasingly grave reports of the growing arming of the Jews, the sharpest possible measures were taken for the elimination of Jewish banditry. Special measures were needed for the breaking up of the Jewish quarter in Lvov. . . . To avoid losses to German forces, brutal measures had to be taken from the outset; several houses were blown up or destroyed by fire. The astonishing result was that in place of the 12,000 Jews registered, a total of 20,000 were caught.⁶

In Stanislav, several thousand Jews still lived in camps attached to the factories in which they worked. The Jews employed in the railway (*Ostbahn*) workshops were shot on April 25, 1943. In June 1943 all the Jews working on the Sipo farm and other enterprises were shot. The final slaughter of Jews in Stanislav took place on June 25, 1943. A few dozen essential workers remained in the town, and these were murdered at a later stage. Stanislav was liberated on July 27, 1944; about 100 Jews survived in hiding or with the help of some local people.⁷

By early spring of 1943 there were still about 6,000 Jews in Ternopol—some in the ghetto and some in the labor camp. Executions of ghetto Jews continued throughout March 1943. On April 8 and 9, most of the ghetto's inhabitants were transferred to the camp, where they underwent selection. Youngsters and those capable of work were left behind. The remaining 1,000 were shot in the fields of Petrikov. Officially, some 700 Jews remained in the ghetto, together with an unknown number of "illegals," who were in hiding at the time of the action. The ghetto was liquidated on June 20, 1943, when about 500 people were taken to the Petrikov fields and shot. Survivors of the ghetto massacre made their way to the camp in hopes of finding shelter, but most of them were caught in police searches. The end came to the camp on July 22, 1943, and its 2,000 to 2,500 prisoners were shot in the Petrikov fields. In some places, Jews used weapons to defend themselves, but none of them survived; they all fell in battle or committed suicide. About 100 skilled workers were sent to the Janovska camp in

Lvov; a few hundred Jews, who had escaped the ghetto or the camp and found shelter on the Aryan side were caught and executed by the Germans. Hundreds of Jews who escaped to the forests were murdered by Ukrainians. Ternopol was liberated on April 15, 1944, and some 750 Jewish survivors came back; some of them were from neighboring townships, and some had lived out the war on the Aryan side or in the forests.⁸

In early spring of 1943 some 4,000 Jews still lived in Drohobych, some in the ghetto and some in camps near their places of employment, including the petrol industry. In March 800 Jews were removed from the camps and shot. The ghetto was liquidated between May 21 and 30, and its inhabitants were taken to the Bronitsa forest and shot. In the ghetto, searches for people in hiding continued until June 19, and many houses were set on fire. The last Jews remaining in the town's labor camps were a few hundred employed in the petrol industry. They were taken in April 1944 to the Plaszow camp near Krakow. Drohobych was liberated in early August 1944, after which some 400 survivors returned from hiding in the town and elsewhere in the region.⁹

Borislav, near Drohobych, also had a petrol-producing plant. By March 1943 about 1,200 Jews still lived in camps attached to the plant, and several hundred skilled workers were living in the ghetto. The ghetto was liquidated gradually between April and June 1943; its inhabitants were murdered, and some of the skilled workers were moved to camps inside the town. Jews still hid in the ghetto area and in nearby forests, helped with food supplies by other Jews inside the camps in the town, but most of them were caught and killed. The murder of Jews in the forests of the Borislav region was carried out by groups of UPA. The evacuation of Jews from the camps in Borislav to the camp at Plaszow began in April 1944. Borislav was liberated on August 7, 1944, and about 800 survivors emerged from their hiding places and returned to the town during the first months following liberation.¹⁰

During March and April 1943 about 3,000 Jews were removed from the ghetto in Buczacz and murdered on Mount Pador near the town. On May 12 most of the remaining ghetto Jews were banished to Chortkov and Tluste, where they were murdered shortly afterwards, together with the local Jews. In mid-June 1943 the last of the Jews in the Buczacz ghetto were shot; all the remaining Jews in the labor camp were shot shortly thereafter. Buczacz was liberated on March 23, 1944, and about 800 Jews came out of the nearby forests and returned to the township. The township was recaptured in a German counterattack, and hundreds of returning Jews were caught and murdered. The town was liberated again on July 21, 1944, but only about 100 Jews had survived.¹¹

In some places in District Galicia, the Germans used deception tactics to lure

Jews out of hiding by promising them that no harm would befall them. The last of the Jews were murdered in Kolomyia in December 1942, and Jews caught after this date were not executed immediately but concentrated in a small ghetto. The Germans spread a rumor among the population that anyone returning would not be punished but would join their brethren in the ghetto. About 2,000 Jews from Kolomyia and its surrounds returned, and in February 1943 the Germans executed them near the village of Shprovtse. The Germans used the same tactics in Rava-Ruskaia and other places.¹²

The people who responded to the Germans' promises did so because of the terrible conditions under which they had been living in hiding and because of the real danger of being discovered by the police or of being betrayed by local non-Jews. In the forests, too, they were persecuted by peasants, who handed them over to the Germans for a handful of money or out of pure anti-Semitism. Some of them fell victim to gangs of Ukrainians who operated in the forests and around the countryside. Return to the ghetto provided the illusion of a temporary extension of their lives and gave them some hope that this extension might even bring about their liberation by the Soviet army. On the liquidation of the Jews of District Galicia, Katzmann wrote in his June 30, 1943, report:

Therewith I report that the District of Galicia, with the exception of these Jews living in the camps, being under the control of the ss and Police Leader, is free from Jews. Jews still caught in small numbers are given special treatment by the Police and Gendarmerie. Up to June 27, 1943, altogether 434,329 Jews have been evacuated [*ausgesiedelt*]. Camps for the Jews are still in existence in Lvov . . . Ternopol . . . Drohobich . . . Stryi . . . [there are twenty-one listed localities] containing altogether 21,156 Jews. This number is being reduced currently.¹³

In an earlier part of the report, Katzmann recorded that 254,989 Jews had been exterminated by November 10, 1942. This shows that, between this date and June 27, 1943, over a period of about seven and a half months, 179,340 more Jews were murdered in District Galicia. It can be assumed that this number does not include the small groups of Jews that added up to several thousands, who were murdered in various locations and not in the course of organized murder actions.¹⁴

LIQUIDATION OF THE LAST LABOR CAMPS

The twenty-one labor camps mentioned in Katzmann's report were either those that housed Jews working on the strategic D-4 road or camps attached to factories producing goods mainly for the German war effort, including the

petrol industry at Drohobych and Borislav. Some of the camps were located on agricultural farms operated by the ss and other German bodies. The liquidation of these camps began in July 1943. Leib Schmieder, a prisoner in the Kurovitse camp, described in his testimony the transfer and murder at Jaktorow in July 1943:

The prisoners of Kurovitse were ordered to board trucks, 50 people to each truck. Armed Ukrainian policemen boarded with the prisoners. . . . Dozens of Jews started jumping off the galloping trucks, with policemen shooting after them. Hundreds of victims fell by the wayside. . . . The [Jaktorow] camp yard filled with Jews who had been brought in from all around. There were Jews from Zolochew, Pluhow, . . . and other places. ss Hauptsturmführer Franz Warzog was in charge of this murder action. . . . He ordered the Jews to undress down to their underpants, and then the police began counting out groups of 50 and leading them to a giant pit. . . . The Jews were ordered to lie down in the pit, and the police shot into it. When they finished with the men, the police ordered the women to be brought — 100 women to each group. There were some who were only wounded and others who were not hit at all. But they were all covered with earth, the living as well as the dead.¹⁵

Schmieder was one of 22 Jews left behind to cover the trench in which the Jews were murdered. He managed to escape. The other camps named in Katzmann's report were liquidated between late June and August 1943.¹⁶

The fate of the Jews of camp Skalat was an exception. Before the war, the Jewish population of Skalat, a township southeast of Ternopol, numbered around 3,000. Most of them were taken to Belzec to be murdered in October and November 1942; the few who remained were shot near the township in April and June 1943. A few hundred Jews were still being held in a labor camp in Skalat.¹⁷ In early July 1943, Soviet partisan units raided the Volhynia regions under the command of Gen. Sidor Kovpak. The partisans did not hold on to the places they had conquered, but continued to advance to their final destinations. In July 1943 the partisans took control of Skalat and found Jews in the camp. Thus, according to Kovpak's deputy, Petr Vershigora:

Skalat stays carved in our memory. . . . Over 300 people, including women, children, and old folks, were liberated from the ghetto by members of the Karpenko company. A large group of torn, battered, and tortured people fell on company 3 in the forest and continued to follow it. . . . We knew that if they remained in the town, the fascists would exterminate them all the next day. Nonetheless, we had no way of taking the poor things with us. After all, we are a military unit, involved in a complex operation.¹⁸

The Germans returned to the town as soon as the partisans had left and, on July 27, 1943, murdered all the inhabitants of the Skalat labor camp.¹⁹

The Janovska camp in Lvov was the largest in District Galicia and one of the last in which all the Jews were murdered. In the summer and autumn of 1943, about 7,000 Jews were imprisoned in the camp. On the morning of November 19, 1943, the prisoners found the camp surrounded by large numbers of Orpo and a company of Caucasian soldiers subordinated to the German Sipo. The prisoners tried to get out of the camp, and the police opened fire, overcame the opposition, and murdered the camp's Jews.²⁰

ANNIHILATION OF THE LAST JEWS IN REICHSKOMMISSARIAT UKRAINE

The mass murder of Jews in Reichskommissariat Ukraine was carried out during 1942. The few thousand Jews remaining after this wave of massacres were exterminated in 1943 and early 1944. The last were murdered only weeks before the arrival of the liberating Soviet army. The ghetto and labor camp in Letichev in the Kamenets-Podolsky province, in which several hundred Jews remained, was liquidated along with its inhabitants on January 30, 1943.²¹ About 100 Jews in the labor camp in Nemorozh in the province of Cherkassy were murdered on August 23, 1943.²² The labor camp at Vladimir-Volynski (Ludmir), with over 500 skilled workers, was liquidated on December 13, 1943.²³ Small groups of Jews held in various places in Volhynia were murdered on the eve of liberation. On their retreat from Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the German army and the ss left no ghetto or labor camp behind nor any Jews alive.

The last Jews of District Galicia and the Jews of Reichskommissariat Ukraine fought valiantly for their lives. Some of them sought refuge among the local population, some went into hiding, and others escaped to the forests. Most of them perished in German and Ukrainian police manhunts, and some were caught after being betrayed by the local Ukrainian population. Only a very few survived.

25

Survival in Transnistria

INCREASING AID TO THE DEPORTEES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THEIR RETURN

Between early 1943 and April 1944, when Transnistria was liberated by the Soviet army, the Jews struggled to survive. Their number, which in early 1943 stood at around 75,000, was constantly on the decrease due to the harsh conditions under which they lived. “Natural” mortality due to starvation and disease continued, albeit on a lower scale than during the previous year. According to official Romanian Gendarmerie statistics for November 15, 1943, the number of Jews living in thirteen districts in Transnistria was 49,927. This number did not include the local Jews, still living at that time in Transnistria.¹

Increased aid from Romanian Jews during 1943 brought about a gradual improvement in the living conditions of the Jews in Transnistria. The extent of this aid depended on the goodwill of the Romanian government in Bucharest. After the fall of Stalingrad and the heavy losses suffered by the Romanian army on the front, Romania concluded that Germany was facing defeat and decided to seek a way out of the war by coming closer to the Allies. The Romanian government’s gradual change in position also affected its attitude toward the Jews and resulted in the removal of some of the bureaucratic obstacles that had previously hindered the dispatch of aid parcels to Transnistria. Also, it became easier for various ghetto committees in Transnistria to communicate with the Jewish community in Romania. In late December 1942 permission was granted for representatives of the Romanian Jewish community to visit Transnistria in order to study the situation of the Jews there. The four-member delegation was headed by Fred Saraga and was accompanied by Romanian government representatives.

The delegates arrived in Odessa on January 1, 1943, where they met with the governor of Transnistria, Alexianu, who informed them that they would be able to visit only Balta, Mogilev-Podolsky, and another place to be determined by the commander of the Gendarmerie. On January 8 and 9, the delegation met with



the Jewish committees in the region of Mogilev-Podolsky. All meetings took place in the presence of the Romanian government representatives. Although the local ghetto Jewish leaders had been warned not to describe the harsh conditions in the ghettos, what the delegation saw was enough to provide a reliable picture of the situation. The delegation then went on to Balta, returned to Odessa for another meeting with Romanian authorities, and returned to Bucharest on January 14. Their report enabled the Jewish community in Romania to improve the dispatch of aid parcels containing clothing, food, and medicines and to direct these to the needier institutions in Transnistria, such as orphanages, hospitals, and soup kitchens. The report focused especially on the terrible state and very high death rate among thousands of orphans. Some of the aid parcels came from individuals wishing to help their deported families and friends.² The delegation was still in Transnistria when Dr. Filderman wrote to Mihai Antonescu and to Ion Antonescu:

Jews are dying in the thousands in Transnistria. The number of orphans has increased from 1,000 to 5,000. In one orphanage, 26 children out of 140 died during a single month. They are suffering from malnutrition. . . . Please bring children under the age of 18 back to Chernovtsy . . . where, with the help of the community, they will receive food and care. . . . If the government does not permit their return, they will all die by the end of the winter.³

During meetings with senior Romanian officials, Filderman also requested the return of widows, invalids, and soldiers who had fought in the past for Romania. In several meetings in January 1943 with Radu Lecca, the man responsible for Jewish affairs in the Romanian government, Filderman proposed transferring the 5,000 Jewish orphans from Transnistria to Romania and from there, via Bulgaria and Turkey, to Palestine. In return, the Romanian government was promised a reward from world Jewish organizations. Mihai Antonescu's response was positive in principle. Germany's Foreign Ministry and Adolf Eichmann of RSHA caught wind of the plan to transfer Jewish children to Palestine and made the Romanian government aware of their objection, on the grounds that it contradicted Germany's pro-Arab policies. The Germans threatened to prevent the transfer, and the plan to was cancelled.⁴

Together with Nandor Ghingold, who was appointed by the Romanian authorities to head the Centrala Evreilor (Jewish Council of Romanian Jews), Filderman asked the Romanian government to return the Transnistria deportees to Romania. From there they would be able to emigrate to other countries. On September 1, 1943, Ion Antonescu informed Filderman of his decision to allow the return of the deportees, whose number, according to Romanian statistics, stood at 50,741.

Once again, plans changed, however, and the Romanian government decided to permit the return only of orphans and people from the Dorohoi region.⁵ The Romanian Interior Office announced on November 12, 1943, that it was permitting the return to Romania of orphans under 12, and that these would be sent to towns whose Jewish communities would take them in. Following negotiations, the authorities agreed to raise the age of returning orphans to 15. But it took three months. Only on February 15, 1944, was permission granted for the return of 1,884 orphans. A delegation of Romanian Jews, again headed by Fred Saraga, set out for Transnistria to organize the return. About 1,400 orphans were assembled in Mogilev-Podolsky before being returned to Romania; the remainder were returned via Tiraspol. The orphans were brought to Jassi and distributed throughout Romania.⁶ Among the children to be brought to Romania were orphans belonging to the local Jewish population. About 3,000 children who had lost only one of their parents and orphans over 15 remained in Transnistria to suffer the fate of the other Jews there.⁷

Another group of deportees whose return was permitted by the Romanian authorities included 6,500 survivors of the 9,000 people banished from the Dorohoi region. A further two categories whom the Romanian authorities wanted to examine to determine whether their deportation had been justified consisted of a group of more than 1,000 suspected communists and another group of 600 people and their families suspected of breaching the forced labor laws. These groups had been deported directly to Transnistria from Romania and not from Bessarabia or Bukovina. In December 1943 the Dorohoi deportees were returned to Romania, together with 400 suspected communists, whom the authorities now declared innocent. From October 1943 Chernovtsy's 15,000 Jews were no longer required to wear a yellow star—a result of the gradual change in official policy toward the Jews.⁸

In early January 1944 the Soviet army advanced westward and arrived close to the river Bug in north Transnistria. The region was to become a battle area, and there was a serious danger of the German army—and with it the German administration—returning to Transnistria, which would place the remaining Jews in serious jeopardy. The question of returning the Jews to Romania became a matter of urgency, but Antonescu chose that very time to announce the rescinding of his earlier decision to return the Transnistrian deportees to their points of origin in Bessarabia and north Bukovina. He claimed that, with the advance of the Soviet army, priority must be given to the evacuation of about 1 million Romanians (Moldavians) who lived in Transnistria, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.⁹

On March 4, 1944, the Soviet army began an attack from its lines west of the river Dnepr. In mid-March 1944 the Soviets crossed the river Bug and entered north Transnistria. Although the ruling Romanian authorities escaped and the

German army took over the administration, this did not last long. The Soviet army liberated Mogilev-Podolsky on March 19 and reached the river Dnestr. Odessa was liberated on April 9 and Tiraspol on April 12, 1944. In mid-March 1944 Antonescu agreed once again to the return of the Jewish deportees to the homes they had occupied prior to being banished to Transnistria. Two Jewish delegations set out for Transnistria to organize the return of the deportees, one to Mogilev-Podolsky and the other to Tiraspol. However, the swift advance of the Soviet army and the battles that raged in the region prevented them from crossing the Dnestr. The Mogilev-Podolsky delegation was forced to return to Romania; the Tiraspol delegation helped groups of deportees to cross the Dnestr and directed them into Romania. Between March 17 and 30, 1944, before the German army had taken control, 2,538 of the deportees crossed the Dnestr at Tiraspol and returned to Bessarabia.¹⁰

THE LIBERATION

With the Soviet army's advance toward Transnistria, the deportees hoped that they would soon be liberated. These hopes, however, were mixed with the fear of being murdered by the Germans before their retreat. Solomon Shapira wrote in his memoir:

The front came closer. . . . It was well known that the retreating Germans left behind them only scorched earth, and it was hard to believe that they would leave us alive. . . . The Romanians realized that the Germans were suffering defeats and began changing their attitude toward the Jews. . . . We decided to join our family in Kopaigorod. . . . We were surprised one morning, after our arrival in Kopaigorod, to discover that the Romanian authorities had disappeared overnight. With them, the Ukrainian police and Nazi collaborators had also disappeared. . . . One day, groups of German soldiers arrived. . . . We couldn't believe our eyes. This time they presented a dirty, exhausted crowd, dressed in rags, who looked around them with fear in their eyes. . . . The Jews no longer interested them, and all they wanted was to get out of the encirclement. . . . On the morning of March 19, 1944, the first Soviet army patrols appeared. . . . The column advancing toward us contained large numbers of Jewish soldiers. These would leave the column and come toward us, hugging and kissing us and telling us that we were the first living Jews they had come across on their way from Stalingrad.¹¹

The Romanian administration left Chernovtsy during the first two weeks of February 1944, and the German army took control of the city. German secu-

rity police began preparing to liquidate the Jews, but the Soviet army liberated Chernovtsy on March 29, before the Germans could carry out their plans. The lives of the town's 15,000 Jews were saved.¹²

In all the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, the region of Transnistria and the town of Chernovtsy were the only places where Jews who still lived in ghettos and labor camps were liberated by the Soviet army. In his memoirs, Yosef Govrin wrote about the liberation of Mogilev-Podolsky and his return to his hometown, Edintsy:

Red army soldiers arrived at the outskirts of Mogilev on March 23, 1944. . . . It was feared that the Germans were planning to liquidate the last of the ghetto Jews, before retreating from the town. . . . In the middle of the street, unarmed German soldiers were sitting or leaning against a fence, dressed in tatters, their eyes downcast. . . . The entrance of the Soviet army was purposeful. . . . They began immediately to register men of military age, including enfeebled Jews who had only just been liberated. . . . Some of our friends were sent to the front on a train that was attacked by the German airplanes. . . . Again, the tragic fate of Jews who had survived the Holocaust but were killed only weeks later in a German air attack. . . . A wave of arrests among the Ukrainian population who had collaborated with the German and Romanian occupation authorities. . . . We decided to make our way home. The return to Edintsy, after everything that had happened, was extremely traumatic . . . a town in which 200 to 300 remained, out of about 8,000.¹³

However, not all the Jews were as fortunate as those in Kopaigorod and Mogilev-Podolsky and other ghettos and camps, in the northern areas of Transnistria, liberated during the second half of March 1944. On March 24, the Germans murdered around 1,000 inmates of the municipal prison, almost all of them Jews, in Tiraspol, which had been liberated only on April 12, 1944.¹⁴

The total number of Jewish survivors in Transnistria, both deported and local, is based on official Romanian records and augmented by estimates. In Transnistria the Soviet army liberated between 40,000 and 42,000 Jewish deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina. To this number should be added some 8,800 deportees, mostly from the Dorohoi region, and some orphans and other deportees who had been returned to Romania between December 1943 and February 1944. To these a further 2,500 deportees must be added who had managed to leave Transnistria via Tiraspol during the latter half of March 1944, just days before the region was liberated. Out of some 157,000 Jews exiled to Transnistria, between 104,000 and 106,000 perished. The survivors numbered between 51,000 and 53,000.¹⁵

It is much harder to evaluate the number of survivors from among the 185,000

local Jews who remained in Transnistria under German–Romanian occupation. No Soviet data, whether official or not, is available. A letter written by Professor Konstantin Grodski, one of the survivors in Odessa, to Iliya Ehrenburg on May 29, 1944, seven weeks after liberation, mentions that, by then, between 1,500 and 2,000 survivors had gathered in Odessa.¹⁶ These were the survivors of the camps and ghettos in central and southern Transnistria, or people from in and around the town, who survived in hiding or possessed Aryan documents. A larger concentration of local Jews remained in the ghettos and camps of north Transnistria. Based on the assumption that in the spring of 1942, between 25,000 and 30,000 of local Jews had survived the mass executions, starvation, and diseases, it may be assumed that between 10,000 and 12,000 local Jews were still alive in the spring of 1944, when the region was liberated. This means that only about 6 percent of all the local Jews survived the German–Romanian occupation.

Although two-thirds of the deportees and most of the local Jews perished, between 61,000 and 65,000 Jews survived Transnistria. Such a high number of survivors in the occupied Soviet territories is unusual and may be attributed to two causes: the Romanian administration and its policies, and the swift advance of the Soviet army and liberation of the region in March and April 1944. Transnistria and the fate of the Jewish deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina, together with the local Jews, constituted a unique chapter in the Holocaust of the Soviet Jews.

26

Action 1005

PREPARATIONS FOR ERASING EVIDENCE

From late summer 1943 until the end of their occupation, the Germans removed and cremated hundreds of thousands of corpses from mass graves throughout the occupied Soviet territories. The objective of this operation was to destroy evidence of the murders perpetrated by the German forces in those regions. The Sipo was given overall responsibility for this operation, which was classified “top secret” and given the code name “Aktion 1005.” The unit and its subunits employed in the operation were called “Sonderkommando 1005” and were placed under the command of Standartenführer Paul Blobel, who, until January 13, 1942, had commanded Sonderkommando 4a, which had been responsible for the killings at Babi Yar in Kiev and elsewhere in the Ukraine. Blobel testified at the Nuremberg Trials on June 18, 1947: “I was the commander of Sonderkommando 4a. . . . In June 1942 Gruppenführer Müller entrusted me with destroying evidence of the executions that the Einsatzgruppen carried out in the east. . . . This order was a matter of state secrecy.”¹

Himmler and Heydrich became aware of the need to eradicate evidence of the mass murders in the wake of publications in the Soviet media, and subsequently in other countries, regarding mass graves discovered by the Soviet army during the 1941–42 winter campaign. In the Crimean town of Kerch, which was liberated on December 30, 1941, Soviet forces found the graves of about 7,000 Jews, murdered in late November and early December 1941. Descriptions of the murders and photographs of the victims were published in the Soviet press.

Soon after his appointment, Blobel and a small team of subordinates began performing experiments on human corpses at the Chelmno extermination camp, in order to find suitable methods for disposing of them. After some unsuccessful experiments with dynamite, finally a kind of “grill” was constructed out of railway lines; bodies were removed from murder pits and layered on the “grills,” with wooden planks between and beneath them. When several layers consist-

ing of hundreds of bodies had been built up, fuel was poured over the pile and set on fire. The flames continued for hours and sometimes days, depending on the number of corpses in the pile. Blobel, a builder and architect by profession, even developed a special machine for crushing human bones; the ashes from the pyres were mixed with crushed bone particles and earth and replaced in the pits from which the corpses had been removed. The pits were then covered with a layer of earth.

The work, which consisted of exhuming corpses from the pits, burning them, and dispersing the ashes, was carried out by groups of prisoners, usually Jews, supervised under exceptionally heavy guard by the German police. In areas where no Jews remained, these jobs were mostly done by Soviet POWs. Once the work was completed, they were all murdered, Jews and non-Jews alike; no witnesses were allowed to live to testify to the murders and to the efforts to erase all evidence of the murders.²

In September 1942, Blobel traveled to Kiev in order to begin erasing the evidence of mass murder. In his testimony, Blobel described his meeting with the Sipo commander in the Ukraine, Dr. Thomas, and its results: "The mission cannot go into operation immediately, both because Dr. Thomas appeared disinclined to carry out the order and because the material needed for burning the corpses was not available."³

A German offensive was being waged at this time on Stalingrad and the Caucasus, and the army was advancing swiftly and conquering large areas. Presumably, so promising a military situation would have led Dr. Thomas and his superiors to believe that the body-burning operation was of no great urgency and could be postponed. The defeat of Stalingrad and the subsequent advance of the Soviet army changed things. Large areas in which Jews had been murdered and buried were liberated between February and May 1943, and the Soviet press made headlines of these revelations. On February 21, 1943, one week after the liberation of Rostov on the Don, Radio Moscow announced the discovery of a mass grave containing the bodies of 20,000 murdered people. In other countries, too, the media began publishing similar information. This, coupled with the swift advance of the Soviet forces, made the matter of erasing evidence of the utmost urgency. Blobel testified:

In May and June 1943, I visited Kiev. . . . Following talks with Dr. Thomas and ss and Police Leader Hennecke, the mission went into operation. . . . Because of the advancing front, it was impossible to destroy [*zu zerstören*] the mass graves that were located at a greater distance. . . . Later, Gruppenführer Müller sent me to Estonia. I passed on the same order to Oberführer Achamer Pifrader in Riga, as well as to Obergruppenführer Jeckeln.⁴

In Lvov thousands of the murdered Jews were buried in the sands (Piaski) near the Janowska camp. Burning of the bodies began there in mid-June 1943. About 120 Jewish prisoners were removed from the Janowska camp and employed in burning corpses. They were accommodated in a specially erected underground building in Piaski. Work was overseen by the Sipo under the command of Untersturmführer Schallock, and about 80 German policemen from the police 23rd regiment were responsible for guarding the place. In order to preserve the secrecy of the operation, no local Ukrainian police were allowed near the site.

The act of erasing evidence of mass murder in Piaski was conducted thus: one group of Jews was employed in opening the graves and exhuming the bodies while another group carried the bodies off and threw them onto a giant bonfire. The bonfire was supervised by a prisoner known as “Brandmeister” (fire chief), whose job, and the job of his helpers, was to keep fueling the fire with blocks of wood and gasoline and to give instructions as to which part of the bonfire needed more corpses thrown on it. They were also responsible for removing the remaining bones for crushing. Next to the bonfire stood a prisoner known as “Zahler,” who was in charge of counting the bodies as they were thrown on the bonfire; at the end of each day, he handed over his report to the on-site Sipo representative. Another group of prisoners, known as “Aschkolonne” (ash team) dealt with crushing the burned bones and sieving the resultant ashes for any remaining gold (teeth, rings, etc.) and other valuables left on the cremated bodies. At the end of each workday, these valuable metals were handed over to the Sipo. At first the burned bones were crushed manually, but later a special machine, which resembled a cement mixer, was brought to the site for this purpose. About 2,000 corpses were burned each day. Sometime after the beginning of the operation, the *modus operandi* for burning bodies was changed. Now, up to 2,000 bodies were piled on a raised platform of wooden blocks, followed by a layer of wooden blocks and another of bodies, and so on. The piling continued for a few days, after which the entire pile was set on fire. The burning of the corpses in the Piaski had been accomplished by September 7, 1943; the Jewish prisoners were taken to burn the corpses of murdered Jews elsewhere in the region, work which continued until mid-November 1943.⁵

Following Blobel’s visit to Kiev in May and June 1943, two units under the command of Sturmbanführer Hans Sohns were established in east Ukraine: Sonderkommando 1005a and Sonderkommando 1005b, each consisting of about 10 members of the Sipo and between 30 and 60 German policemen. Both

Sonderkommando units began their activity in the territories that were closer to the front line, under immediate danger of falling to the Soviets. From there, the commandos moved westward. Sonderkommando 1005a began its operations at the Babi Yar; Sonderkommando 1005b began working in Dnepropetrovsk.⁶

Over 300 prisoners, among them about 100 Jews, were brought from the nearby Syretsk camp in mid-August 1943 in order to burn the bodies of the Babi Yar victims. Ziama Trubakov, a Jewish inmate of the Syretsk camp, testified:

On August 18, 1943, I was brought to Babi Yar. . . . Two prisoners stood there and tied chains to our legs. . . . Some of the prisoners were taken to the Jewish cemetery, and from there they took headstones and iron fences. They used the headstones and fences to create a 10 meter by 10 meter raised platform, with air vents underneath. Afterwards, the platform was covered with alternate layers of bodies and wooden planks, and gasoline was poured over the pile of bodies and wood. Between 2,000 and 2,500 bodies were laid [on each such platform]. They were set on fire. . . . We spread the ashes over the nearby fields. A prisoner named Rapoport and I were forced to examine the bodies, to remove gold and other valuables. . . . I was there until September 28, 1943, until the escape. During that period I was witness to the burning of more than 125,000 corpses.⁷

Blobel testified: “During my visit in August, I personally reviewed the burning of bodies in the mass grave near Babi Yar. The grave was 55 meters long, 3 meters wide, and 2.5 meters deep. After the top covering had been removed, the corpses were covered with flammable material and set on fire. It took about two days for the whole grave to burn. . . . Afterwards, the grave was covered and the evidence was destroyed.”⁸

Kiev was liberated on November 6, 1943, and members of the foreign press were brought to Babi Yar to see what had taken place there. On November 30 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) announced in London that “before withdrawing from Kiev, the Germans emptied the graves of the 70,000 Jewish corpses, murdered there two years before, and burned them.”⁹

In early October 1943 Sonderkommando 1005a moved to Berdichev, Belaya-Tserkov, and Uman, where it operated until January 1944. The prisoners employed in burning corpses in these places were murdered in Uman when their work was completed, and the Sonderkommando’s German staff went to the Carpathian Mountains for some rest and recreation. They returned to Kamenets-Podolski in February 1944, but since the Soviet army liberated the area on March 26, 1944, their activity there was short-lived. The Sonderkommando then went to work in the region of the General Government.¹⁰ Sonderkommando 1005b began its

operations in Dnepropetrovsk and went on from there, no later than early October 1943, to Krivoi-Rog; by winter it was in Nikolaev. From there, the unit was sent on vacation in the Carpathians. On April 9, 1944, it moved to Riga.¹¹

In Belorussia, Aktion 1005, under the command of Sipo in Minsk, was begun in early autumn of 1943 by Sonderkommando Mitte (center), which was organized in Belorussia for this purpose. The largest mass grave in Generalkommissariat Belorussia was in the vicinity of Malyi-Trostiniets, in a forest clearing in Lagovchina, about 11 kilometers from Minsk. Cremation began there in October 1943, and the methods used were similar to those in Piaski near Lvov and in Babi Yar in Kiev. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry: "During a visit to the site, we found 34 pits-graves . . . and a system of griddles on which lay partially burned corpses. . . . In order to destroy the bodies of the murder victims, they built a special oven."¹²

Simultaneously with the burning of bodies removed from mass graves, there continued the execution of groups of Jews from Minsk as well as of non-Jewish prisoners. There were cases of Jews being brought to the site and burned alive. Adolf Riba, the German who was in charge of the prisoners in Sonderkommando 1005 Mitte at Malyi-Trostiniets, testified to what happened there during November 1943:

At 15:00, Harder [who was in charge of erasing evidence] came to me. . . . Into the pile of bodies and wood planks which had reached a height of about 2 meters, Harder inserted an upright pole. . . . As he was busy doing this, two trucks arrived from Minsk together with Dr. Heuser, who came in his car. In the trucks were about 10 ss men from Minsk and about 30 Jewish men and women. The Jews were ordered to get off the truck. Twenty of them were taken by Dr. Heuser and the ss men who came with him to an open pit nearby and shot. . . . The 8 to 10 remaining Jews were ordered to undress, and their wrists and ankles were bound by ropes. . . . The naked, bound Jews, of whom there were more women than men, were dragged by the ss men from Minsk and raised via a ladder to the top of the pile, where they were laid. Harder, who was standing at the top of the pile, tied one of the female Jews to the upright pole and then descended from the pile and set them on fire. Before that, they poured gasoline on the Jews. As [the pile] was burning, the Jewess who had been tied to the upright pole suddenly jumped down. The rope which had been used to tie her had probably burned away. She was caught immediately by the commando people from Minsk and placed back on the top of the pile. Notwithstanding the flames, the murderer went back up on the pile and retied the Jewish woman to the upright pole. . . . The Jews who were being burned alive emitted horrific cries as the flames consumed them.¹³

Between the end of October and mid-December 1943, the corpses of about 40,000 murdered Jews were burned at Malyi-Trostinets. The prisoners employed in burning the corpses were themselves murdered when their work was completed. In order to mislead them, they were told that they were being transferred to Minsk, given bars of soap and towels, and ordered to sign a document promising to maintain the secrecy of the work they were about to carry out. They were then thanked for their work, placed in cars which actually were gas vans, and suffocated.¹⁴

Between September 16 and 22, 1943, Sonderkommando 1005 Mitte operated in the vicinity of the Belorussian town of Molodechno, where it burned 2,000 corpses. The POWs employed in this work were shot on the last day of the operation. Following a brief Christmas break, the Sonderkommando on January 17–26, 1944, resumed its work in the Smolevichi region northeast of Minsk, where it incinerated about 5,000 corpses. In early February, the unit spent two months working in the region north of Minsk and burned about 20,000 corpses. The 60 prisoners employed there were put to death in gas vans on April 2. On April 3 Sonderkommando 1005 Mitte was transferred to the region of Pinsk in Polesie, and the local Sipo placed 60 prisoners at its disposal. Around 21,000 corpses were removed from graves and reduced to ashes. When the job was complete, the prisoners were placed inside a bunker, which was then blown up with its human contents. Sonderkommando was active in the Kobrin region between May 31 and June 24 and in the Slonim region between June 25 and July 5. The Soviet POWs employed there were murdered when their work was completed. Sonderkommando 1005 Mitte moved to the Lomzha area in the General Government on July 15. In early April, a subunit of Sonderkommando 1005 Mitte was sent to Brest-Litovsk region, and the local authorities placed about 100 prisoners at its disposal. The body-burning operation began in Bronnaya-Gora, where 48,000 Jews from Brest-Litovsk, Pinsk, and other towns had been murdered. The action continued until mid-May, when the unit was transferred to continue its work in the General Government. All the prisoners working in the Brest-Litovsk area were ultimately murdered.¹⁵

Sonderkommando, which was responsible for destroying evidence in the area of military administration in east Belorussia, began operating in early October 1943. A special Sonderkommando consisting of 68 Germans and 280 prisoners was established for the purpose of burning corpses. A subunit of this Sonderkommando was active from October 20, 1943, north of Gomel, where it burned 3,500 corpses. On October 26, this subunit moved to Ozarichi, west of Gomel, where it burned 4,000 corpses over four or five days. In early November this subunit joined its mother unit in the village of Polkovichi, where they burned about 11,000

corpses, most of them Soviet POWs. When the work was finished, the prisoners were exterminated.¹⁶ In Vitebsk, the Germans opened graves and removed the corpses of thousands of Jews and burned them in October 1943; these Jews had been murdered in the Ilobo River valley and elsewhere.¹⁷ In Orsha, some 6,000 corpses of murdered Jews were removed from graves in the Jewish cemetery and burned.¹⁸ In the Bobruisk area, the corpses were burned in late 1943 and early 1944. In Rogchev, east of Bobruisk, 3,000 corpses of Jews and a group of Gypsies were burned in December 1943.¹⁹ In Polotsk, too, the Germans burned the murdered bodies of Jews and Soviet POWs.²⁰

In the regions of west Belorussia, which was included in Generalbezirk Bialystok, the Germans began erasing evidence of mass murder in April and May 1944. Hauptsturmführer Waldemar Macholl, from Sipo in Generalbezirk Bialystok, was appointed to command the Sonderkommando that was established in the region. The Sonderkommando consisted of some of the local Sipo staff and 50 to 60 German policemen. Forty Jews were removed from the prison to carry out the work. In the Grodno region, the Sonderkommando burned 10,000 corpses during the second half of May 1944 and 4,000 in the region of Skidel and Luna. On July 3, with the approach of the Soviet army, the Jewish prisoners were shot, except for 10 who had managed to escape and survive.²¹

In the Baltic states, Aktion 1005 began in early autumn of 1943 and continued until summer 1944, close to the liberation of the entire area by the Soviet army.²²

In Generalkommissariat Estonia, the destruction of evidence of mass murder was begun in December 1943 and carried out by the local Sipo forces. In the early months of 1944, action to destroy evidence of mass murder was carried out in Kalevi-Liiva, where the Jews of Tallin were buried after the massacre of 1941.²³ The final mass murder of Jews in Estonia took place in the concentration camp at Klooga, where 2,500 Jews were murdered and cremated on the spot on September 19, 1944, the day on which the Germans withdrew from the region. The Soviet army arrived only a few days after the massacre and found several piles of bodies layered between planks of wood, which the Germans had not had time to incinerate.

In Generalkommissariat Latvia, Aktion 1005 began in April 1944 with the arrival of Sonderkommando 1005b from the Ukraine to the vicinity of the Salaspils concentration camp. From then, and until mid-September 1944, the Sonderkommando incinerated about 20,000 corpses. The 80 Jewish prisoners employed in this operation were murdered at its end. A subunit of this Sonderkommando was sent to burn corpses in Daugavpils.²⁴ The fact that Aktion 1005 began relatively late in Latvia—leaving the Germans only four to six months before the arrival

of the Soviet forces who liberated most of the country—meant that the majority of the mass graves remained intact.

In the largest valleys of death in Generalkommissariat Lithuania, Panerai near Vilnius and Ninth Fort in Kaunas, Aktion 1005 commenced in the autumn of 1943. In Ninth Fort the cremations began in late October. The local Sonderkommando, under the command of Obersturmführer Radif of the Kaunas Sipo, included dozens of German policemen and 73 prisoners. The knowledge that they were ultimately to be murdered led the prisoners to prepare for a mass escape on Christmas night. Some of the escapees made it to the Kaunas ghetto.²⁵ A secret memo prepared and signed by 11 of the Ninth Fort escapees when they arrived at the Kaunas ghetto included the following information:

During the period from November 1 to December 25, four and a half pits were opened . . . and over 12,000 corpses of men, women, and children were removed from them. These corpses were piled on top of each other, 300 in each pile, and set on fire. . . . Many of the corpses had been buried alive—wounded or completely unhurt. On the day of the escape, there remained pits which had not yet been opened. The Gestapo heads had thought of completing the work by February 1, 1944.²⁶

To replace the escapees, the Germans removed dozens of Jews from the ghetto and the camps surrounding Kaunas, and these continued with the burning of corpses until late March 1944.²⁷

Sonderkommando 1005 began its activity in Panerai near Vilnius in late September and early October 1943, immediately following the liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto. The Sonderkommando consisted of several of the Sipo members in Vilnius, about 60 German policemen and about 80 Jews—about 70 of them from Vilnius and its vicinity, captured shortly after the liquidation of the ghetto, and 10 prisoners of war, 9 of whom were Jews. Among the prisoners, there were also 4 women whose job it was to clean out the living quarters and to cook.

The prisoners were held in a pit 6 to 8 meters deep and 15 meters in circumference. Entry to the pit was via a ladder, and once the people were all inside the pit, the ladder was raised. After the Christmas night escape of Jewish prisoners from Ninth Fort in Kaunas, security was tightened at Panerai. The pit was surrounded with barbed wire, and its immediate surroundings were mined. Prisoners' ankles were shackled at all times, leaving them able to take only short steps, and they were under heavy guard.²⁸ The Jewish POW Yuri Farber had managed to hide his Jewishness by passing himself off as a Ukrainian. In January 1944 he was discovered and taken to Panerai and employed in burning corpses. He testified:

Our task was to burn 800 corpses a day. . . . The *Trager* [porters] carried the bodies to the wooden pyre. There the figures were piled up in rows one on top of the other. When one layer was stacked, spruce branches were put on top. . . . A pyramid was considered ready when it contained 3,500 corpses. . . . A pyramid usually burned for three days. . . . The men were mostly from Vilnius, and there was not one of them who did not find his family among the corpses. . . . There were several religious men in the pit. From time to time, they would organize requiems in honor of the dead. The services were conducted solemnly and mournfully. . . . The *Sturmführer* was a threat and a terror. Whenever he appeared at the edge of the pit, everyone knew that no good would come of it. . . . The *Sturmführer* would stand there looking at us and then say to someone, “Why are you walking so slowly? Are you sick?” The man would answer that he was well. . . . But the *Sturmführer* said to him: “Tomorrow you’ll go to the infirmary.” Everyone knew that this meant he would be shot.²⁹

On the night of April 15, 1944, prisoners escaped from Panerai. Most of them were killed outright, and only 15 managed to get away. Seventy Jewish prisoners were then brought in from the Kailis camp in Vilnius to continue burning corpses. All these Jews were murdered prior to the German withdrawal in July 1944. In Panerai, in the space of nine months, around 60,000 corpses were incinerated.³⁰

Aktion 1005 was a highly classified operation. Orders and reports were given and received verbally, and no German documents were saved to provide evidence. The SS, which was responsible for the operation, did everything in its power to prevent a leak of information on the site. Operations to erase evidence of mass murder were certainly conducted in other places as well, apart from those cited here, but even when the war was over, the German perpetrators maintained their silence except for individuals like Blobel who were forced to confess at the war crimes tribunals.³¹ Most of the Jewish and non-Jewish slave laborers employed in the burning of corpses were themselves murdered once their job was done. Our main source of information on the operation comes from those prisoners who, notwithstanding the strict security surrounding the sites, managed to escape and to testify on what happened and what they witnessed in the valleys of death at Babi Yar, Ninth Fort, Panerai, and other places.

Aktion 1005, which commenced in the summer of 1943 in the occupied Soviet territories, was only partially successful in achieving its objective. The swift advance of the Soviet army from 1943, following the fall of Stalingrad, prevented the Germans from completing their plan to erase all evidence of the murders they

had committed. In addition, the commanders of Action 1005 had no records and knowledge about all the places where the killing actions were carried out, especially those of the Orpo, Waffen-ss, and army units. There is no way of knowing how many corpses were cremated in the course of the operation—hundreds of thousands, certainly, possibly even millions. But millions of corpses remained in the pits in which they had been buried. This tangible evidence—the corpses of millions of Jews and non-Jews, murdered by Nazi Germany and its collaborators in the occupied Soviet territories—remained for posterity. In its main objective—destroying the evidence of mass murder—Aktion 1005 failed.

SEVEN

The Murder of Specific
Jewish Groups

The Murder of Mixed Marriages, Their Offspring, and Jewish Children in Boardinghouses

MIXED MARRIAGE FAMILIES

From the beginning of German occupation in the Soviet territories, the problem of “mixed marriages,” that is, those involving Jewish and non-Jewish partners and their offspring (*Mischlinge*), was on the agenda of the German authorities. Although no reference was made to mixed marriages or their offspring in the orders issued to the German administration designated to serve in the occupied areas, on the eve of the invasion, the issue came up early in the Ministry for Occupied Eastern Territories, concurrently with the mass murder of Jews there. The question was whether to relate to mixed families as to Jewish families, or to murder only the Jewish spouses in such families, and how to deal with the children of these families, who, according to the Nuremburg laws, were half-castes. The number of mixed marriages in the occupied Soviet territories was greater than in other parts of occupied Europe.

In the old territories of the Soviet Union, since the communist revolution, the Jews had undergone a demographic change, together with a change in their national and religious identity. These changes had far-reaching consequences on statistics regarding “half-caste,” as Altschuler writes:

The [traditional] religious and secular-national frameworks which had previously been sufficient to prevent or reduce the extent of mixed marriage were dissolved and constantly repressed by the [Soviet] authorities. . . . Most of the Jewish public accepted mixed marriage. . . . Unlike in pre-revolutionary times, Jewish youngsters were no longer required to estrange themselves from their families and the Jewish community.¹

The extent of mixed marriage was not uniform in all places within the old areas of the Soviet Union. In the regions of Belorussia and large parts of the Ukraine—the

former Pale of Settlement—Jews continued to live in Jewish neighborhoods. In these areas the extent of mixed marriage was smaller than in the Russian Republic, to which large numbers of Jews had migrated after the revolution and were integrated into the local population. With the years, the extent of mixed marriage in the “old” Soviet Union increased. In 1936, a little over 14,000 marriages took place among Jews in the Ukraine; of these some 8,000 involved Jews with Jews and a further 6,000 were between Jews and non-Jews.² It may be assumed, therefore, that between 1937 and 1941 the number of mixed marriages increased and may even have passed the 50 percent mark. This number indicates that the problem of mixed marriages and their offspring involved many thousands of people and that the German authorities had to decide on their fate.

The conditions in the annexed territories differed from those within the old territories. In those areas, Jewish society protected its national identity, lived in neighborhoods whose population was mainly Jewish, and, until being annexed to the Soviet Union, was organized in Jewish communities. The Jewish population in those areas was largely Orthodox, and marriage with non-Jews was extremely rare. In those rare cases, moreover, the people involved were usually required to relinquish their Jewishness and sever relations with their Jewish families, who preferred to erase the wayward son or daughter from their lives rather than accept their change of religion. Since very few young Jews were prepared to pay so high a price, the number of mixed marriages and half-caste offspring was low. Of around 20,000 weddings among the Jews of Lithuania between the two world wars (an average of about 1,000 a year), no more than 5 per year (or .5 percent) included non-Jews.³ Since Jewish communities in other annexed Soviet territories had similar traits, it may be assumed that a similar number of mixed marriages took place among them as well.

GERMAN POLICIES ON MIXED MARRIAGES AND THEIR OFFSPRING

Faced with a large community of mixed marriages and their offspring, many of whom had blatantly Russian family names, within a situation in which most official archives were either removed or destroyed during the evacuation of the Soviet administration, the occupying Germans had very few registers to which to turn for reference on the population’s nationality. This situation differed from that in other occupied countries in Europe, where most of the former municipal administrations and their archives continued to operate. The German administration, both military and civilian, and the Sipo active in the occupied territories did not wait for instructions to arrive from Berlin regarding mixed

marriages and their offspring and operated their own policies, which were not uniform in all parts of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union.

The earliest available document on the fate of mixed marriages and their offspring in these territories was drafted on August 9, 1941, a few days after the German civil administration took control of Lithuania. The document that was published by the Kaunas Gebietskommissar Lentzen, on ghettoizing Jews and forcing them to wear a yellow star, stated:

These directives are relevant to half-Jews, or those who have one Jewish parent. As for mixed marriages, the following policies will apply: Jews married to non-Jews are to be treated as all the other Jews, which means they must be ghettoized, and all decisions relating to Jews are applicable to them. These decisions must not be applied to the Aryan partner in the case of divorce. If they do not divorce, the Aryan partner will enter the ghetto and will be subject to all decisions relating to Jews.⁴

This ruling was all-encompassing. Although not specifically mentioned, divorce from the Aryan partner did not require the agreement of the Jewish spouse. As for the offspring of such couples, the directives makes it clear that such children were to share the fate of the Jews, even if their parents were divorced. The ruling did not recognize the term *Mischlinge* or the special status allocated to these people by the Nuremberg laws.

Lohse's temporary instructions issued on August 13, 1941, do not refer directly to mixed marriages and their children, but define who should be considered a pure Jew, and half-Jews were not referred to as Jews. According to Lohse, a pure Jew is someone who has three Jewish grandparents, or someone who has one or two Jewish grandparents and belongs to a Jewish community or is married to a Jew.⁵

Lohse's document dated October 7, 1941, which was titled "Handling Jews of mixed marriages," was more detailed:

1. Mixed marriages without children or with adult children: If the Aryan woman does not wish to divorce her Jewish husband, she will be subject to everything that has been decided with regard to the Jews. If she wishes to divorce, the rules apply only to her husband.

If the husband is Aryan and his wife is Jewish, and if the Generalkommissar has not decided otherwise, the woman may, if she is under 45 years of age, remain with her husband, on the condition that she agrees to undergo sterilization. Women aged above 45 years are allowed to remain with their husbands, even without sterilization. . . . If the Aryan husband dies, his Jewish wife will be subject to all the rulings determined for the Jews, no longer than one month after his death. If

- the Aryan husband wishes to divorce, his wife will be subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews. If the wife is under 45 years of age and refuses to undergo sterilization and her husband refused to divorce her, the couple are subject to all the rulings determined for the Jews. . . .
2. Mixed marriages with one or more young children: If the Aryan wife refuses to divorce her Jewish husband, the entire family (including the children) are subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews. But if the Aryan wife agrees to divorce her husband, she and her children will not be subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews, on the condition that neither she nor her children belong to a religious Jewish community. . . . If the husband is Aryan and the wife is a Jewess aged under 45 years . . . the wife may remain with her husband, on the condition that she agrees to undergo sterilization. Women aged above 45 may remain with their husbands, even without undergoing sterilization; the child[ren] will remain with the husband . . . on the condition that they do not, nor have in the past, belong[ed] to a religious Jewish community. If the Aryan husband dies . . . the wife will not be subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews, so long as one or more children are still alive. If her son has fallen in battle on the side of Germany or one of Germany's allies, she will not be subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews. A Jewish spouse in a mixed marriage whose children have died or reached adulthood will be considered a childless Jew and will be dealt with in accordance with Clause 1. If the Aryan husband wishes to divorce [his Jewish wife], the children will remain with the husband and the wife will be subject to all the laws decreed for the Jews. . . . If the Jewish woman is under 45 years of age and she refuses to undergo sterilization and her Aryan husband does not wish to divorce her, the entire family will be subject to all that has been decreed for the Jews. . . .
 3. If the Aryan partner belongs to a religious Jewish community, all the aforementioned is invalid. He is considered a Jew. . . .
 4. In all cases of doubt, the Generalkommissar will decide.⁶

The letter that accompanied these directives on November 1, 1941, to the Generalkommissars in Ostland and the Higher SS and Police Leader pointed out that even if couples had received different treatment in the past, these new directives were now to be followed and, if necessary, people were to be released from the ghetto.

The Gebietskommissars in Latvia were ordered to report to the Generalkommissar by December 10, 1941, on the following issues:

- A. The number of Aryans who divorced their Jewish spouses;
- B. The number of Jewish women who underwent sterilization;
- C. The number of Aryan women who chose to share the fate of their Jewish husbands.⁷

Lohse's instructions appeared to the senior echelons in Berlin as being too "liberal." In a letter to Lohse dated February 5, 1942, headed "Handling the Jews," Georg Leibbrandt, head of the political department of the Ministry for Eastern Territories, wrote: "With regard to your directives on the issue of Jewish and non-Jewish spouses in mixed marriages, we have certain reservations. But since the new definition of the term *Jew* in the eastern territories is still under discussion, and is about to be published, it would appear to me that it is undesirable at the moment to change your decision . . . and the handling of Mischlinge will be clarified in the new directives."⁸ The Ministry for Eastern Territories drafted a document and convened a meeting on January 29, 1942, to discuss a new definition for the term *Jew*. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Otto Brautigam, deputy head of the Ministry's political department, and attended by representatives of the RSHA, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior, and the military, as well as a representative of the head office of the Nazi Party. Thus, according to the minutes of the meeting, which was classified "secret:"

The meeting was opened by the chairman, Dr. Brautigam, who stressed that difficulties in obtaining documentation have made it impossible to impose the Nuremberg laws in the occupied eastern territories, so that it is imperative to reach a [different] decision as soon as possible on the definition of the term *Jew*. . . . Dr. Alfred Wetzel explained that Mischlinge grade 1 are considered Jews, for several reasons. First, for political reasons, because they are not reliable and pose a danger, due to their relatively large number. . . . Unlike in the Reich, no difficulties are anticipated in the occupied eastern territories, if it is decided to consider Mischlinge grade 1 as Jews. . . . Party representative Reischauer pointed out that he sees no particular danger in including the Mischlinge grade 1 among the Jews, since their foreign [non-Jewish] blood does not have the same value as German blood. Following the discussion . . . this draft order was accepted: "A Jew is someone who has declared that he belongs or is known to belong to the Jewish religion. . . . A Jew is someone who has one Jewish parent. In case of doubt, the decision will be taken by the Generalkommissar (and Sipo commander) or anyone authorized by him."⁹

The decision as it was accepted actually canceled the term *Mischlinge* in the Nuremberg laws because even someone who was a quarter Jewish (who had one Jewish grandparent) was considered a Jew, since one of his parents was consid-

ered a Jew. The participants in the January 29 meeting stressed that they are forcing this decision for two reasons: the non-Jewish blood of these Mischlinge was of the inferior Slavic race, and no political problems were anticipated. The so-called political problems referred to the possible objection of certain members of non-Jewish society, to whom the half-castes were connected by family or religion. Unlike in Germany and in other countries under German occupation, where the German authorities considered the feelings of non-Jews connected by family ties to Jews, the German authorities disregarded the feelings of the people in the occupied Soviet territories since these were Slavs. This new decision regarding the definition of a Jew cancelled Lohse's October 7, 1941, definition, according to which the children of an Aryan father in a mixed marriage were not considered Jewish and the children of an Aryan woman who agreed to divorce her Jewish husband were not subject to anti-Jewish laws. The January 29, 1942, decision, therefore, was a death sentence to many thousands of Mischlinge in the occupied Soviet territories.

This definition, according to which a Mischlinge was considered a Jew, aroused some indignation among the local population and the local German administration in the occupied territories. People who had hitherto been considered by the local population to be non-Jews, and many of whom had family relations among this non-Jewish population, were now Jews and subject to persecution and extermination. In Generalkommissariat Latvia, some of the non-Jewish spouses in mixed marriages were ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*). A document dated May 9, 1942, issued by the political department of Generalkommissariat Latvia to Lohse, said:

In accord with the Sipo commander in Latvia, I wish to express my opposition to the implementation of the [new] ruling on "Defining the Term *Jew* in the Occupied Eastern Territories" in Generalkommissariat Latvia, for the following reasons: . . . Such attitudes toward Mischlinge makes more difficult the political situation in Generalkommissariat Latvia, where no one—especially not among the population—is able to understand it. . . . Our experience has taught us that in solving the problem of Mischlinge, many descendants of such marriages have German blood. . . . The problem of Jewish half-castes has been solved a long time ago in Generalkommissariat Latvia according to the directive issued by the Reichskommissar on October 7, 1941. . . . Since, in accordance with this directive, the problem of Mischlinge in Latvia has been solved, it appears to me impossible to implement the change, even in the case of Jews married to non-Jews. . . . One hundred and seventy-five cases of such marriages were found in Riga, most of whom were childless. In Riga, there are no more than 250 Mischlinge.¹⁰

This document caused no change in the instructions issued by the Ministry for the Eastern Territories regarding mixed marriages and their offspring. However, since authority was granted to the Generalkommissars and local Sipo commanders to make decisions (meeting dated January 29, 1942), the local German authorities were entrusted with carrying out these instructions, case by case.

Himmler objected in principle to the interference of the Ministry for Eastern Territories in a field that was under his authority and to the very existence of the definitions, which he saw as restricting the SS in exterminating the Jews. In a letter to Obergruppenführer-SS Guttlob Berger, Himmler's liaison officer with the Ministry, dated July 28, 1942, Himmler responded thus:

I hereby urgently request to avoid publishing any instructions regarding the term *Jew*. With all these stupid definitions, we shall only tie our own hands. The occupied territories in the east will become free of Jews. The Führer has entrusted me with this difficult task. No one can, anyway, divest me of this responsibility. I forbid any kind of interference in decision making.¹¹

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES REGARDING MIXED MARRIAGES AND MISCHLINGE

The anti-Jewish decrees, published during the first months of the occupation with regard to yellow stars, hard labor, etc., did not mention mixed marriages and Mischlinge. Nor were these mentioned in orders to close Jews in ghettos or for Jews to report for "deportation out of town." Lacking any specific instructions, the mixed families and the Mischlinge behaved according to their own understanding. In the old territories, where most of the Jewish spouses in mixed marriages did not see their association with non-Jewish partners as reason to alienate themselves from their nationality, many understood that they, too, were subject to the anti-Jewish rulings. Lacking information on the meaning of the deportations, and knowing that anyone not reporting would be shot, Jewish spouses in mixed marriages joined the march toward Babi Yar in Kiev and other murder sites and shared the fate of all the Jews.

In certain places, orders of the military administration included information as to which of the Jews were exempt from deportation. Sara Gleich, a young Jewish woman from the Ukrainian town of Mariupol, noted in her diary that an October 17, 1941, order to the local Jewish population, announcing that they were to report for deportation, added: "The Jewish women who had Russian or Ukrainian husbands can stay in the city if their husbands are with them. If the husband is in the (Soviet) army or absent for any other reason, the wife and her children have to leave the city. If a Russian woman is married to a Jew, she has the

right to choose: she can either stay alone or go with her husband. Her children may remain with her.” In the Crimean town of Simferopol, Jews were ordered to report for deportation on December 9 and 10, 1941. All five Jewish sisters in the Frigov family were released from the assembly point, after their documentation proved that they were married to Russians.¹²

This lasted only until summer 1942. Once the mass murder of Jews was completed and following the April–May 1942 directives that a Jew is anyone who has at least one Jewish parent, there began the systematic murder of Jewish spouses in mixed marriages and their offspring. Alexander Shilko described the murder of Jews in the Ukrainian town of Zaporozhe:

Following the mass murders [of Jews], all the children of mixed marriages were taken away to be murdered. . . . In the Nikolayevka suburb there lived a Lieutenant Bondarenko. He was away at the front. His wife, Fanya Bondarenko, had a mother who had converted to Christianity before the revolution. Fanya had two children. She and the two children were shot, because Jewish blood flowed in the veins of the third generation. And here is a fact that has no equal. Leiman’s sister, who was a German [Leiman was a local German who had volunteered to the police in Zaporozhe], was married to a Jew. From this marriage she had two children. Leiman himself forced the two children out of her arms and handed them over to be exterminated. . . . One of the prisoners in the Gestapo prison gave his wife a note, in which he wrote, among other things: ‘The youngest among the prisoners is six months old.’ It was a mixed race baby, and as it was dangerous to hold him alone in the prison, his [Aryan] mother sat with him.¹³

Many non-Jewish mothers chose to accompany their children to their deaths. As Evgeni Ponizovska from Melitopol testified, “The searches began for the children of mixed marriages. I shall never forget the sight of a policeman carrying a baby and its weeping mother running behind him. It happened in broad daylight, openly. The policemen would come and take the children in order to shoot them. Many mothers were shot along with their children.”¹⁴ And according to the report of a Soviet commission of inquiry in the town of Poltava: “More than 8,000 Jews were murdered in Poltava. . . . Ukrainian or Russian mothers held their Jewish children, stood [in line], and were shot together with their children. Husbands were shot alongside their Jewish wives whom they loved.”¹⁵ Victor Matukhov, a Russian who was married to a Jewess and father of her three children, described the fate of his family:

On October 9, 1942, my family and I were arrested: my pregnant wife, Anna Abramovna, born in 1910; my daughters Lydia—born in 1927, Olga—born

in 1929, Tamara—born in 1938. . . . We were led to the prison in Melitopol [Ukraine] and placed in a room, in which several officers were sitting. One of the officers asked me in Russian: “Do you know why you have been arrested?” I answered him in the negative. He told me that I was to be released and my family would be sent to a camp. I replied that I would go with my family. . . . They started dragging me. My four-year-old daughter held on to me and shouted: “I shall go with my father.” An ss man grabbed her by the arm and hurled her like an animal under the table, behind which the officers were sitting. I don’t know what happened next. When I regained consciousness, I was in a cell and I saw an acquaintance of mine called Korol; the same had happened to him and his family. Suddenly we heard the shouts of women and children. Then we heard the sounds of motors and the shouting ceased. I don’t know how much time passed before a policeman entered and said: “Get out.” When we went out we saw the officers standing there. They said to us: “You are released and your families have been deported,” and a stinging laughter was emitted from their mouths. . . . Three days later I was called to the ss, where they forced me to change my family ID card to a bachelor’s ID card.¹⁶

Pinpointing the mixed marriages and Mischlinge, their arrest and murder were carried out mainly with the aid of the local administration and local policemen, who were familiar with the population. Thus, according to kolkhoz member Varvara Lvovich, a Russian woman married to a Jew, who lived in the village of Nem-Adargin in the Crimean district of Telman:

On January 15, 1942, my husband was arrested in the village of Nagaichi by the policeman Parapanin, of the Seitlerovsk district police, and taken to police chief Litvinenko. On January 18, 1942, 18 people were shot, among them my Jewish husband, Moshe Lvovich. . . . In January 1943, my children, as children of a mixed marriage with a Jew, were taken from me by the policemen Alexander Muzika and Kozima Rebrii and the village head Ivan Puseiev. In the papers, my children were registered as Russian. But the village head tore the papers up. My children were Yakov Lvovich, aged 11, and Leonid Lvovich, aged 9. The children were arrested and taken to Dzahnkoi, where they were shot.¹⁷

The “Black Book” describes the fate of Jewish and non-Jewish mixed marriages and their offspring in the Smolensk region:

In the town of Monastyrshchina . . . Alexandrovna Dubovitskaia Liubov, a Russian teacher, was married to a Jew. She was arrested and tortured. Her 7-, 4-, and 1-year-old children were murdered. . . . Yitzhak Rosenberg, whose wife,

Natalia Emelianovna, was Russian, had two small children. They remained alive. His wife was able to persuade the murderers that the children were from her first husband. For over two years, she hid her husband in a hole beneath the stove. . . . In September 1943 the Red Army approached the town. . . . There was fighting. . . . Natalia took her children and, like the other inhabitants of Monastyrshchina, she escaped to the forest. She returned when the Red Army took over the town. She still managed to see the ashes and the smoke and the stove. Yitzhak Rosenberg suffocated to death from the smoke. He had spent twenty-six months under the stove and died two days before the liberation.¹⁸

In all parts of the old occupied Soviet territories, the murder of a Jewish spouse in a mixed marriage and the offspring of such a union was carried out unhindered, and many thousands of these people were annihilated. Treatment of mixed marriages was different in the occupied territories that had been annexed to the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1940, where their number was smaller. In Ostland, they were dealt with according to Lohse's October 7, 1941, directives. These were not cancelled by the Ministry for Eastern Territories April 27, 1942, orders, according to which all Mischlinge were Jewish.

No mention is made in Jewish sources on the Vilnius ghetto of mixed-marriage families residing in the ghetto, although there is reference to a small group of converted Jews having been brought into the ghetto.¹⁹ In the ghetto in Kaunas, several Christian women chose to share the fate of the Jews rather than divorce their Jewish husbands.²⁰ No data exists on sterilization of Jewish women married to Aryans or on Aryan women who divorced their Jewish husbands in order to save themselves and their children in Generalkommissariat Lithuania. There were several cases of Jewish women who had converted to Christianity years before the war yet were being forced into a ghetto after the death of their Christian husbands.²¹

Information on sterilization and divorce does exist with regard to Generalkommissariat Latvia. According to a March 27, 1942, report prepared by the Gebietskommissar of Riga, relating to events the previous month: "The order to sterilize is relevant to 45 Jewish women from mixed families. Fifteen of them have been sterilized to date. Request for divorce have arrived from 103 Aryan women married to Jews. Some of the requests are being dealt with in the Latvian District Court."²² According to a Soviet report, about 200 Jewish women were sterilized in Riga, and most of the procedures were carried out in the university clinic.²³ In west Belorussia some Jewish women married to Aryan men were sterilized.²⁴

In various parts of Ostland the German administration carried out registration of mixed families and their offspring.²⁵ On October 13, 1942, the Sipo

commander in Lithuania, Hauptsturmführer Schnitz, issued the following order to the Sipo Lithuanian department, under the heading “Registration of Mixed Jewish Couples”:

All mixed marriages in Lithuania, of whom one partner is a Jew, must be registered, and the list must be brought to me by December 31, 1942. Registration will be carried out by the Lithuanian Security Police. . . . A Jewess living with an Aryan will have to live under restrictions. She is forbidden to enter restaurants, hotels, coffeehouses, and other places of entertainment. Moreover, she is forbidden to visit theaters and public baths. Any deviation [from this order] will be reported to the Sipo and the woman will be transferred to the ghetto.²⁶

In late November or early December 1942, a proposal was raised by the Generalkommissar of Latvia, according to which identification cards (Personenausweis) would be issued to former prisoners of war (Latvians who served in the Soviet army and were released from German prisons). Jewish women from mixed-race families who continued to live with their Aryan husbands and children above 15 years of age would be issued such ID cards. These cards would grant their holders a definite legal status and make it difficult for the local Sipo to act on whims and to treat them arbitrarily. On March 3, 1943, the Sipo commander in Ostland issued an order to his subordinates forbidding the issue of such ID cards.²⁷

The debate between the various German administrations in Latvia over authority for the families and individuals of mixed marriage continued until the very eve of the region’s liberation by the Soviet army. On April 6, 1944, the Sipo commander in Latvia wrote to the Sipo commander in Ostland requesting the support of his superiors for his decision that the Sipo was the only authority permitted to determine who was a Jew. The Sipo commander in Ostland subsequently sent a letter on May 3, 1944, to the Reichskommissariat’s political department, pointing out that the Sipo was in possession of the means necessary for investigating these subjects and only the Sipo was authorized to determine the matter.²⁸

These letters, written almost three years after the onset of German rule in Latvia, show that the issue of mixed marriage and the desire to prevent Jews from avoiding their fate by claiming to be only half-Jews occupied the Germans throughout their stay in the region.

In the Volhynia and Polesie regions of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, as in other areas annexed to the Soviet Union, the extremely small number of mixed-race families and mixed-race individuals were treated by the German administration in a similar way to that in Ostland. The Jewish male spouse in a mixed marriage was usually made to suffer the fate of all the Jews, while the Jewish woman and

children of mixed race were spared. The existence of Mischlinge within the general population is mentioned in the September 1, 1942, edition of the official newspaper of Generalkommissariat Volhynia-Podolia. The paper published an announcement on behalf of the Brest-Litovsk Gebietskommissar, under the headline “Judische Mischehen” (Mixed marriages with Jews), informing readers of the ban on marriage between non-Jews and half-Jews, whereas marriage with quarter-Jews required the permission of the Gebietskommissar.²⁹

Nazi policies on mixed marriage and Mischlinge in the occupied Soviet territories were not uniform. In the old territories, where the occurrence of mixed marriage was more commonplace, the procedure conformed with the April 27, 1942, orders of the Ministry for Eastern Territories: anyone with one Jewish parent was a Jew and shared the fate of all the Jews. The German policies of murder were implemented in all the old territories from summer 1942 until the end of the German occupation. In the annexed territories, Jewish women in mixed marriages were given, with their children, the chance to avoid sharing the fate of the rest of the Jews. Jewish men in mixed marriages and even those who converted to Christianity were forced to share the fate of the other Jews.

It would appear that the widespread cooperation of the local population in the annexed territories with the Germans, especially in Lithuania and Latvia, contributed to different attitudes toward mixed families. The locals considered these people to be part of their own families and their nation and the church saw them as Christian in every way; the German administration sought increased cooperation with the local population, especially extensive recruitment into the police and military, and was reluctant to cause ill will among them by harming the female Jewish partners in mixed marriages and the Mischlinge. It may be assumed that the lives of most of these females and most of the Mischlinge were saved in the territories annexed to the Soviet Union.

No numerical data exists on the victims from among the mixed marriages and Mischlinge in the old territories of the Soviet Union, but considering the extent of these unions, it is feasible to assume that they were in the tens of thousands.

MURDER OF JEWISH CHILDREN IN CHILDREN’S HOMES

As the Soviet army retreated eastward in 1941–42, numerous children’s homes, housing many thousands of children, were left behind. These were orphanages, convalescent homes for young patients with tuberculosis and other chronic illnesses, homes for the mentally and physically impaired, etc., and were not included among the institutions evacuated to the Soviet hinterland. In certain

places the war also created a need to remove children from their parents' homes and to relocate them to the Soviet hinterland. Such was the situation in besieged Leningrad and other cities which had come under the German air attacks. Some of the evacuated children were sent deep into the Soviet rear area, but others were taken to the Krasnodar region of southern Russia, only to find themselves later under German occupation.³⁰

The various children's institutions remaining in the region under German occupation were home to thousands of Jewish children. Moreover, there were numerous Jews among the staff who ran these homes—managers, teachers, care workers, doctors, and nurses. The Jewish children and staff members in these institutions were taken out and murdered. Often it was the non-Jewish staff members who informed the German authorities of the presence of Jews in the various institutions. According to a document detailing the murder of Jewish children in the center for mentally handicapped children in the township of Preslav in the district of Zaporozhe:

Ilia Rupchev was appointed manager of the center. . . . In October 1941 two German officers arrived at the center. The two toured the center with Rupchev. Afterwards, a local workman approached them and asked the interpreter to tell the officers that there are many Jews in the center. . . . After the German officers had left . . . Rupchev was ordered to prepare a list of all the children, detailing their ages and ethnic origin. . . . Rupchev then handed over the list to the German commander, Wolf, who penciled in the names of the Jewish children and ordered to have them all shot. On October 30, 1941, two German officers drove up to the center accompanied by a group of German soldiers. One of the officers ordered Rupchev to assemble all the children in the dining room. . . . Rupchev read off the names of all the Jewish children. The German soldiers caught them immediately and took them in groups of ten behind the dining room. There, alongside pits dug for the winter storage of fruit the Germans shot 47 Jewish children.³¹

This description is based on the testimony of Ilia Rupchev and other staff members at the children's center, who were arrested by the Soviet army and tried after the liberation of the region. The nurse, Dimitrova, who was asked at her interrogation if there had been any possibility of saving the children, replied that they might have been spared "if Rupchev had destroyed the children's personal files beforehand and not revealed their nationalities."³² The region was under German military administration at the time the children were murdered.

In early January 1942, 36 Jewish children were murdered in the children's home in the village of Lipovienk, in the district of Kirovograd in the Ukraine.

The children were between 4 and 9 years, and the murders were carried out by a fifteen-man team of Ukrainian policemen from the nearby town of Golovanevsk. The children, who were told they were being taken on a day trip, were seated in winter wagons and driven to a previously dug pit, where they were shot. Some of the children were only wounded and thrown into the pit while still alive.³³ On March 25, 128 Jewish children were murdered in the children's home in the village of Mikhailovka in the county of Tomakovka, district of Dnepropetrovsk. The murders were carried out by local policemen under the command of G. Mogda. According to a Soviet report on the murder:

After the cruel murder of 128 adults and children, the murderer Mogda and a few other policemen went down into the antitank trench, started turning over the bodies of the children and firing pistol shots at anyone still alive. . . . Former policeman Y. Kozlov recalled that when he started to turn over the bodies, he noticed that Lena, a little Jewish girl, was still alive. He covered her with other bodies, hoping by doing so to save her, but another policeman saw [what he was doing] and attracted Mogda's attention. Mogda went to Lena and she raised her head and said: "Shoot me. You're never going to be pardoned anyway." In response to these words, Mogda fired three shots into her head and body.³⁴

There was an orphanage in the village of Dimitrova, near Berdichev, on the way to Zhitomir, home to 70 Jewish children. Attempts to save their lives by baptizing them into the Christian faith proved futile, and a day after a visit by the Gebietskommissar of Berdichev and members of the local municipality, the 70 Jewish children were led to Lisaia-Gora and shot.³⁵

In Minsk, according to statistics, the number of children in children's homes stood at some 2,000, of which between 500 and 600 were Jewish. In a desperate effort to save their children, some Jewish parents took their babies or small children from the ghetto and left them at the entrance to these homes, hoping that the staff would take them in. Anna Gurvitch, who was "abandoned" as a baby near Children's Home no. 3 in Minsk, wrote about the lives of children in these institutions:

When Mother "abandoned" me near the children's home, she placed a note in the pocket of my dress, on which she had written 'Anya Pateka, born in 1939. . . . The name Pateka, which became my surname, saved my life. Could I survive with a name like Gurvitch? . . . It was done by many who escaped the ghetto. . . . The order had been given in Minsk on July 20, 1941, to isolate the Jewish children in the children's homes. The survival of many of the Jewish children may be attributed to the staff at these homes, who knew of

the identity of these children and risked their own lives to save them. . . . The Germans knew that they were not shown all the children during their visits to the children's homes. And the result was that they made many surprise night visits. They walked among the sleeping children, carrying torches, picked out children according to their physical appearance, noted their personal numbers and demanded [that the staff] bring them in the morning for an expert examination. At first, they transferred the Jewish children [they found] to the ghetto. Later, they took the children in gas vans straight to the pits at Malyi-Trostinets. . . . There were cases in which the ethnic cleansing was carried out at the initiative of the managers of the children's homes. According to the indictment against the former manager of Minsk's Children's Home no. 1, A. Pietukhovskaia, this woman, on January 6, 1943, . . . gave information on the Jewish children in the institution [under her authority] and, as a result, 30 children were taken away in a gas van. . . . My mother found me in May 1946. For more than a year, she had wandered from one children's home to another, looking for a girl called Anya Pateka, aged 6. . . . I was fortunate. My mother, who also survived, found me.³⁶

During its summer 1942 attack, the German army advanced toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus and captured the areas of Karsnodar and Stavropol in southern Russia. The climate in these regions was moderate, and it was here that the children's homes from besieged Leningrad and the Crimean peninsula had been evacuated. According to research on the evacuation of children from besieged Leningrad: "Aside from the main objective—saving the lives of the children—there was another reason for evacuating the children: [the absence of children] made it easier to defend the city, alleviated the supply situation, and released female workers to the defense of the city. It was decided to evacuate 400,000 children from Leningrad, including 20,000 babies, 140,000 kindergarten children, and 240,000 school-age children."³⁷

Evacuation took place mainly during the spring and summer months of 1942, via Lake Ladoga, in boats that were shelled by German artillery. Many of the children were hurt. During the summer of 1942, thirty children's homes were transferred to villages in the Krasnodar region. The occupation of these areas by the German army during August 1942 was swift and left no time for most of the children's houses to be evacuated; thousands of children, including many Jewish children, found themselves in the hands of the Germans.

In late September or early October 1942, in the village of Orekhovsk, not far from the city of Maikop, over 300 children were made to participate in a roll call in a children's home that had been evacuated from Leningrad. About 13 Jewish children were removed from the parade by the institute's manager,

Tatiana Zinkova, in accordance with a list she had prepared; the children were taken from the site and murdered. Some children, whose Jewish identity had been concealed, were saved.³⁸

In the spa township of Teberda near the town of Mikojan-Shakhar in the autonomous district of Karachayevsk south of Stavropol, several convalescent homes had been built for children suffering from chronic diseases, and many of the medical staff employed in these institutions were Jewish. According to a Soviet committee of inquiry report on the murder of staff members and children in these homes:

On December 12, 1942, at 12:00 noon, the Gestapo began to hunt for their victims. At around 15:00 the Germans forced 285 Soviet citizens into one of the sections of the Vagonchik convalescent home; among them were about 100 children. For two whole days, the detainees were made to suffer the cold and hunger; they were beaten and their money and valuables were confiscated. . . . At 5 o'clock on the morning of December 14, 1942, all 285 of the tortured Soviet citizens were led a kilometer and a half out of the hamlet, to . . . Lisaia-Gora, where they were shot. . . . Attached is a list [dozens of names, all of Jews] of young patients and staff of the village, who were shot on December 14, 1942.³⁹

The document was prepared on July 5, 1943, and no mention is made in it of the word *Jew*. It is possible to determine that all of them were Jews only by the names mentioned in the document. This conforms with Soviet policy, according to which the identity of the victims and the unique fate of the Jews was not singled out, and they were all grouped under the term *Soviet citizens*.

Vadim Maniker, a young Jewish tuberculosis patient who had been evacuated from the Crimean peninsula to the spa town of Taberda, along with the convalescence home in which he was being treated, testified:

We arrived at the wonderful town of Taberda, to which some 1,500 children had been brought from convalescence homes in southern Crimea. . . . In August 1942 the occupiers arrived. . . . Two weeks later some of the nurses and almost all the female doctors—there were no male doctors—were wearing a yellow star of David. The head doctor was called Elisabeth Scheiman. . . . About two months later we heard shots. . . . How did I stay alive? I owe my life to Elisabeth Scheiman. I learned later that she had altered the lists . . . and marked all the Jewish children as being of other nationalities. . . . But this did not help, because the non-Jewish nurses who worked there betrayed the Jewish children. Of 54 [Jewish] children, 52 were murdered. There remained

myself, who was obviously overlooked because I was a newcomer and didn't look Jewish. There also remained a girl, Valia Poliakova, who was registered as Armenian. . . . The 52 Jewish children were put to death in gas vans.⁴⁰

Children's homes from the besieged town of Odessa were also evacuated to the Krasnodar region. One of these was located in the town of Armavir west of Stavropol. According to the testimony of the Russian head teacher, Vera Olshevskaja, some 80 children were inmates at the home in August 1942. The manager of the home was ordered to prepare a list of Jewish children. Olshevskaja was able to erase 14 names from his list of 28. The remaining 14 children on the list, ages 4 to 9, were murdered.⁴¹

The murder of Jewish inmates of children's homes and the Jewish staff employed in them was carried out as part of the overall plan to exterminate all the Jews in the occupied Soviet territories. All parts of the German administration, as well as the management and staff of the homes, were involved in these murders. The murder of Jewish children was an outstanding expression of the enormous zeal displayed by the lowest echelons of the German administration in catching and destroying the Jews to the very last one. No one was spared, not even individual Jewish children in homes located in the most remote of the villages and hamlets.

Similar, although undocumented, cases took place. The German murderers, together with the staff of the various children's homes—those who were responsible for preparing lists of Jewish children sentenced to death, and those who stood by and did nothing to save the children's lives—all preferred to forget these cruel events. Only a few of the children remained alive to tell the tale, but it is clear that those staff members who wanted to save at least some Jewish lives were able to do so, albeit at great personal risk. But not all the children's homes had staff with the necessary courage.

When they came across children's homes containing retarded or handicapped Jewish children, the Germans murdered them all. They murdered also severely retarded or severely handicapped non-Jewish children.⁴² Less handicapped non-Jewish children in these homes were left untouched.

The full number of Jewish children in orphanages and various medical institutions, or children evacuated from besieged or bombed cities, who ultimately found themselves in areas occupied by the Germans is unknown. Thousands were murdered, and only a few—who managed to conceal their identity—survived.

28

The Murder of Jewish Prisoners of War

GERMAN TREATMENT OF SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR

Germany's military campaign against the Soviet Union, which Hitler defined as being not merely an armed struggle but a conflict between two world-views, was expressed in Germany's treatment of its Soviet prisoners of war.

Out of 5.754 million Soviet POWs, between 3 and 3.3 million died in captivity. Most died of starvation and disease.¹ In its military plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union, Germany did not take into consideration that suitable camps had to be erected to accommodate large numbers of POWs. Nor were logistic plans made for providing food for these prisoners. This attitude toward human needs and the complete disregard for international agreements on the way POWs should be treated was the deliberate offshoot of Germany's intention to starve to death the millions of "subhumans," as the Soviet POWs were deemed.

The first order that dealt directly with the deliberate murder of some categories of Soviet POWs issued prior to the invasion was known as the "Commissars Order." This gave the German army power to execute all prisoners who were commissars, members of the Soviet army's political arm, or communist activists. In order to implement the order, an agreement was achieved on July 16, 1941, between General Hermann Reinecke and Heydrich about placing Sipo teams into POW camps. In this agreement the Jewish POWs were also defined as elements that had to be murdered. It was the army's task to select the groups destined for extermination and to hand them over to the Sipo teams in the POW camps, who were in charge of the actual execution. On July 17, 1941, Heydrich issued his "Einsatzbefehl no. 8" to the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen operating in the occupied Soviet territories and the Sipo commanders in the General Government and Germany. These were ordered to post teams consisting of four to six men in the POW camps in which Soviet prisoners were being held.² Their tasks consisted of

subjecting the camps' inmates to a political check, to separate them and to deal with them. . . . These must be singled out: all the important state and party functionaries, . . . the political commissars in the Red Army, . . . leading persons in [Soviet] political life, members of the Russian/Soviet intelligentsia, all the Jews. . . . Executions must not take place in the camp or in the vicinity of the camp.³

This meant that all the Jewish POWs were destined to be executed. Their death sentence was determined not because they were commissars or political activists but because they were Jews. An extensive web of informants (*Vertrauensmänner*) operated among the prisoners in the POW camps. Its job was to supply information to the camp authorities on the presence of commissars and Jews and on activity among the prisoners.⁴ Already, on July 24, 1941, General Wagner had issued an order forbidding the transfer of Jewish POWs from the areas under German military control in the occupied territories of Soviet Union to Germany.⁵ This meant that Jews had to be exterminated close to the front line, in the army prisoner collecting points or in transit camps.⁶

The OKW issued an order on June 1942 to cease the execution of Red Army commissars and members of the army's political arm. The execution of Jewish prisoners and criminal elements would continue.⁷ The reason behind this order was that the commissars and other members of the political arm, knowing what would happen to them in German prisons, stiffened the resistance of the units under their command. This OKW order aimed to weaken this resistance and to surrender without fear of execution. In relation to Jewish prisoners, racist ideology prevailed over practical reasons.

MURDER OF JEWISH PRISONERS OF WAR

Until the moment they were identified as Jews, the Jewish POWs suffered the same cruel treatment as was meted out to all POWs. They died of starvation, sickness, or cold in the camps or on the marches they were forced to make over hundreds of kilometers to camps in the rear area.

No official statistics exist, either Soviet or German, as to the exact number of Jewish soldiers in the Soviet army who were taken captive by the Germans, so the numbers are based on general evaluations. The Jews constituted 1.8 percent of the pre-1939 Soviet population. If we are to assume that this was their proportion in the Soviet army and among the Soviet POWs, then out of some 5,750,000 Soviet POWs, the number of Jews would have been over 100,000. In fact their number was smaller. A considerable number of Soviet POWs deserted and crossed to the German side, especially during the first year of the war. Aware of Germany's cruel

treatment of the Jews, Jewish soldiers in the Soviet army would not have been among those who willingly went into captivity. It is possible, therefore, to assess the number of Jewish soldiers in German POW camps as having been between 80,000 and 85,000. Many Jewish POWs tried to conceal their nationality, but only a few succeeded. In his memoirs, Soviet army captain W. Bondarets described his time in captivity:

One day in early July [1942], the camp commandant . . . appeared at morning roll call. . . . He stood aside, holding onto a leashed muscular German Shepherd dog. . . . The commandant walked slowly along the line of prisoners, examining each of the men's faces. . . . "All Jews are to step out of the lines!" he ordered in Russian. "You have two minutes to decide." Two minutes passed. . . . "Form a single line!" he ordered. "Take off your trousers, quick!" Once again, accompanied by the corporal, he passed along the line of prisoners, who had lowered their heads in shame and humiliation. This time he did not look at their faces, but passed slowly from one to the other. . . . The commandant stopped for a longer time by one of the prisoners. "Jew?" he asked. The young man paled and nodded his head. The dog, which felt itself freed from its leash, leapt forward. A wild cry filled the air. The trained dog sunk its teeth in the poor Jew, tore apart his thigh with its claws and dragged him down to the ground. The weakened young man tried to free himself from the animal, but fell after a few steps. . . . The show lasted for several minutes. Satisfied with the show, the Oberleutnant pulled the blood-smeared dog to him. The corporal shot the prisoner in the ear. . . . The commandant said, "I advise the Jews to step out of the line." Three stepped out. The commandant smiled and signaled to his soldiers. The Jews were taken away, and the roll call was over.⁸

In all the POW camps it was common practice to identify Jews by forcing them to remove their trousers and underwear. Whereas non-Jewish facial features often masked the prisoners' Jewishness, this test exposed all the circumcised prisoners and was therefore extremely lethal. Testimonies of Soviet POWs who had managed to escape, or who survived their imprisonment, and testimonies of Soviet citizens who were able to observe activity in the camps are full of descriptions of Jewish POWs being tortured before they were murdered.⁹ Lieutenant Alexander Abugov, a Jewish POW, managed to hide his identity, and he described how Jewish prisoners were tortured before being shot:

The Vinnitsa camp was the first in which I saw what it meant to be a Jewish prisoner. . . . A 50 sq meter building was allocated to house 600 Jewish POWs. The building was separated from the rest of the camp by a barbed wire fence.

. . . After midday the persecution of Jewish POWs began. They were forced to do exercises: arms up in the air holding a brick, knees bent; walking in this position, still holding the brick up in the air; or “fall to the ground” into the mud. Afterwards, the German would choose five or six men and force them to immerse themselves in the cesspit until their heads were covered. Anyone raising his head was hit with sticks by the German guards. We were forced to stand by the fence and watch. The Jews’ clothes were soaked with feces and smelt terrible. . . . The mortality rate among the Jews was very high, and during my ten-day stay at the camp, almost no Jews remained.¹⁰

The camp authorities were helped in singling out Jews trying to hide their identity by the camp police, which consisted of other POWs, undercover informants from among the prisoners who were operated by Abwehr officers, and prisoners who betrayed the Jews out of purely anti-Semitic motives. In his testimony, Gavriel Brus, a Soviet POW in a camp in the Pogegeen hamlet in Lithuania, reported that “with the help of informers, the camp authorities singled out the communists and POWs of Jewish nationality. These people were arrested and brought to the forest in groups of fifteen to twenty, and shot. . . . Rumor had it among the prisoners that the number of those who were shot was at least 2,000.”¹¹

The search for Jewish prisoners who had managed to escape detection in the assembly points and in transit camps in the occupied Soviet territories continued in POW camps in the General Government and inside Germany. The following testimony was heard at the trial of Sipo member Hermann Benzler, who served in the summer of 1943 in a POW camp in the General Government town of Cholm: “Selection was generally carried out by members of the Sipo commando. . . . Sometimes commissars were found and Jews, etc., with the help of informants [V-Leute], or they were given away by their comrades. . . . Selection of Jewish POWs was often carried out on the basis of their being circumcised. . . . The commissars and the Jews were also handed over by members of the camp police.”¹²

Some Jewish POWs evaded discovery by claiming to belong to one of the Soviet Union’s Islamic nations, who also practiced male circumcision. This was made possible of a knowledge of the language of the nation to which they claimed to belong and familiarity with Islamic customs. It was easier to get away with this ruse among the camps’ German staff, but much harder among the informants and members of the camp police. And, indeed, only a few Jews succeeded. Paramedic M. Konzharov-Melamed was one such, and he testified:

In September 1941, in the region of Kiev, I was taken prisoner. . . . On my first day in the POW camp I saw the terrible maltreatment carried out by the Germans and the total annihilation of Jews and communists. I decided to

make use of my familiarity with the Caucasian nations and make an attempt to survive. . . . I changed my name from Melamed and presented myself as an Azare. With the help of Dr. Churbakov [a Russian prisoner] I was detailed to work as a medic in the prisoners hospital, and I was there until November 4, 1943, the day that I escaped.¹³

Some of the Einsatzgruppen reports mention the murder of Jewish POWs. According to report no. 132, dated November 12, 1941, "At the request of the Commander of the Borispol POW camp . . . on October 14, 1941, a unit of Sonderkommando 4a shot 752 Jewish prisoners of war, among them some commissars, and 78 wounded Jews were handed over by the camp physician."¹⁴ The Einsatzgruppen report dated December 22, 1941, said, "In the course of a thorough examination in the prisoner of war camp in Vitebsk, 207 prisoners were apprehended and shot. . . . During an examination of the prisoner of war camp in Vyazma, a total of 117 Jews were caught and shot."¹⁵

The German army played a wholehearted and devoted part in the murder of Jewish POWs and Soviet army political commissars. In the camps the Sipo teams were augmented by the Wehrmacht units who guarded the camps. August Neubauer, a sergeant in the 783 defense battalion, testified at his trial for the murder of Jewish POWs by Company 2, in which he served. In October 1941 his battalion, under the command of Hauptmann Georg Garbel, arrived in the Ukrainian region of Kirovograd, and Company 2 was transferred to the POW camp near Adabash. Neubauer testified:

There was a hut in the camp in which Jewish POWs were held in isolation. . . . I was told that these Jews were about to be shot. The following day I went along as an observer to watch the operation being carried out. When I arrived I saw a 20-man firing squad under the command of Corporal Kempf. The prisoners to be shot were 120–150 men. . . . They were stood in groups of about 15 men, facing the firing squad and were shot. . . . There was a doctor present who, following each round of fire, checked if any of the prisoners was showing any sign of life. He had a gun that he used for mercy killings.¹⁶

In several German military hospitals, medical experiments were performed on Jewish POWs. At his interrogation by the Soviet army after liberation of the region in which he hid, Shimon Lezerovich Sokonnikov, who escaped from a POW camp in February 1943, recalled:

On April 13, 1942, fifteen of us were transferred to the military hospital in the town of Dnepropetrovsk, where we were held in a cellar. Until July 15, 1942, all kinds of medical experiments were carried out on us, such as

blood transfusions. . . . Over a period of eight days, seven times a day, they used to drop some kind of stuff into my eyes, which made me lose my sight for several hours. Afterwards, they used to drop something else in my eyes and my sight would return. It was very hard to suffer this. Apart from this, our group was used as blood donors. Three times blood was taken from me. . . . Apart from this, they carried out the following experiments on us: they injected something into our neck and back, which resulted in a very swollen neck, and this went on for an entire month. Sometimes the swelling didn't go down and the person died.¹⁷

The relatively large number of Jewish doctors serving in the Soviet army was reflected in the number of doctors among the POWs in German captivity. But because so many doctors were murdered for being Jewish, very few medical personnel remained to care for the Soviet prisoners; in some POW camps, the Germans kept Jewish doctors alive and working in the hospitals, but murdered them in the end along with the other Jewish POWs. Andrei Sergeevich Pograbanov, a Russian doctor imprisoned in the camp in Smolensk, testified: "In February, 1942, there were nine Jews among the doctors in POW camp number 126. They received half the portions of food allocated to the other prisoners. That month they were made to join a prisoners march, and, according to rumors, they were killed on the way."¹⁸ The few Jewish doctors who survived POW camp did so by concealing their identity or escaping from captivity.

No data was available before the 1990s on the number of Soviet POWs who survived their captivity. In 1993, statistics were published on the number of POWs who returned to the Soviet Union at the end of the war. The number of returning Soviet POWs was 1,368,849. A national cross-section of the returnees pointed out that the number of Jews among them was 4,457.¹⁹ According to this data, of the estimated 80,000 to 85,000 Jewish soldiers to be taken prisoner by the Germans, 5.5 percent returned from captivity. They survived because they managed to conceal their religion.

JEWISH POWS IMPRISONED BY THE FINNISH ARMY

Jewish soldiers in the Soviet army taken prisoner by the Finnish army faced a different fate from that of Jewish POWs captured by the Germans. In spite of their relatively small number, the story of these prisoners deserved a special focus. Although an ally of Germany in its war against the Soviet Union, the war conducted by Finland was a "separate" war. For the Finns, this was a "war of continuation," a second stage to the Soviet aggression of November 1939 until March 1940. Finland was then forced to hand over about a tenth of its

territory to the Soviet Union. Finland's "separate" war aimed to repossess these territories. The Finnish army established its own camps for the Soviet POWs, and these were kept apart from the German army's camps.

It is reported that 64,188 Soviet soldiers fell into Finnish captivity, most of them captured by the end of 1941. As a result of the September 19, 1944, armistice agreement, 44,453 of these prisoners were returned to the Soviet Union. Around 18,700 POWs were executed or else died in captivity as a result of hard labor under harsh winter conditions, starvation, or disease.²⁰

There are no statistics on the number of Jewish soldiers taken prisoner by the Finns. Many of them hid their identity out of fear of the Finns and because of the outspoken anti-Semitism of their fellow Soviet POWs.²¹ Based on the evaluation that the Jews constituted 1.8 percent of Soviet society, it is possible to assume that they constituted a similar percentage among the Soviet POWs. Thus the number of Jewish POWs would have been in the region of 1,150. Many of these POWs were members of the "national militia" (*narodnoe opolchenie*) from Leningrad and included workers, clerks, and students, mobilized in a rush and sent to the front, inadequately armed, and poorly trained. The percentage of Jews among these units was higher than their average in the army. The Jews made up 6.32 percent of the Leningrad population, which makes it possible to assess that the number of Jews among the POWs in Finland was higher than 1,150. The thousands of Soviet POWs who perished in Finnish captivity included hundreds of Jews.

On June 29, 1941, Finland's army GHQ issued an order according to which "prisoners of war are to be treated in a humane manner."²² Still, notwithstanding the separate management of POW camps and the independent attitude toward the Soviet POWs, there was agreement between Finland and Germany that POWs who were defined as "dangerous political elements" were to be handed over to the German SS. In this context hundreds of POWs were transferred to the Germans, including commissars and other POWs whom the Finns considered to be dangerous political elements; all these faced death in Germany. With this action the Finns relieved themselves of unwanted elements without having to "dirty" their hands with murder, and they were rewarded by the Germans with Soviet POWs of Finnish origin and members of other nations who were close to them ethnically. A list of the POWs handed over to the Germans between October 1941 and October 1942 includes the names of 70 Jewish prisoners. The list included Jewish officers who had been among the political staff of the Soviet army.²³

Finland's treatment of its Jewish POWs was identical to that of its non-Jewish prisoners. They were incarcerated in the same camps, given the same meager food rations, and employed in the same kinds of work. Their fate was infinitely better than that of the Jewish Soviet POWs in the hands of the Germans. Changes

took place during the spring and summer of 1942 in the condition of some of the Jewish POWs. A group of Jewish prisoners, which grew gradually until it numbered around 300, was brought from various camps to central Camp 2 in Naarajarvi, and from there, to the nearby township of Montola. Some of the group was concentrated in a separate camp in Laukolampa. The Jewish officers were not brought to the Jewish camp, but remained in those camps in which officers of various Soviet nationalities were held.²⁴

The Finnish-Jewish community, since 1943, extended some help to the Jewish POWs. Mikhail Tomarkin describes the visit of a rabbi from the Finnish-Jewish community: "One day during 1943, we were visited by a Yiddish-speaking rabbi, who was accompanied by a Finnish officer. The visit had a calming effect on the people. He gave out various kinds of gifts. Later, we received parcels from the local Jewish community."²⁵ The documentation at our disposal does not provide a sufficiently clear reason for holding Jewish POWs separately from the remaining prisoners, but several testimonies of Jewish prisoners recalled things they had been told as they were being concentrated. According to Lazer Rasskin's memoirs:

About a hundred of us were assembled in a single hut, guarded by Finnish guards with submachine guns. It came as a surprise to me to see familiar people around me and to hear animated conversations in Yiddish. It was very pleasant that evening, even though we knew that this might be the last [such occasion] before our death. The following morning, our previous suspicions were confirmed. They concentrated us under a special guard of Finnish submachine gunners, and a Finn addressed us in pure Russian [with words] that sounded more or less like this: "The objective of the Führer is to exterminate all the Jews, so that Jewish faces will no longer rule the world. And if this is the will of the Führer, then so be it. We, the Finns, also hate you, but we won't kill you ourselves. We shall load you onto a ship that will take you to Palestine. In any case, you'll be drowned on the way." This was his frightening speech. Afterwards, they loaded us on a truck and transferred us to an unknown destination. We traveled for a long time until we arrived at a certain place that is called Laukolampa.²⁶

Mikhail Schleifer testified:

They assembled us and placed us in freight trucks and boarded up all the doors and windows. The Finnish guards told us that we were being transferred to Germany for extermination. We traveled for two days and arrived at night at a large camp surrounded with barbed wire. We were told which hut to enter. We didn't know where we were or what was happening to us. . . . This Jewish camp was situated in the township of Juvoskele.²⁷

Josef Gurvitz, a prisoner in the Viborg (Viipuri) camp, wrote in his memoirs:

In spring 1942 all the Jews were isolated in one hut and forbidden to go out. There were about a hundred people gathered there. The Jews, who were sure that they were being handed over to the Germans, were in a panic. Afterwards we were transferred to the Naarajarvi camp. It was very bad there. . . . Later we were transferred to Montola.²⁸

From the testimonies of Rasskin and Schleifer it is obvious that their Finnish guards told them that they were being taken to Germany, where they were to be exterminated. Gurvitz's testimony, too, gives the impression that the prisoners were in fear of this. In none of these testimonies, nor in the testimonies of other Jewish POWs in Finnish captivity, is it said that they were being concentrated in order to improve their situation, which is what, in fact, happened. In the absence of Finnish documentation which would shed light on the reasons for concentrating all the Jewish POWs in the summer of 1942, all we are left with is hypothesis. It would appear that the matter can be viewed against the background of the relations between Germany and Finland regarding Finland's Jews.

In accordance with the protocol of the Wannsee Conference, Finland's 2,000 strong Jewish population was included in the "final solution" plan. Between April 9 and April 20, 1942, Arno Anthoni, head of the Finnish State Police (known as the Valpo), visited Berlin on Heydrich's invitation, to conduct talks with Gestapo head Heinrich Müller and his men, including Friedrich Panzinger, who headed the Gestapo's department "Investigation and Struggle Against the Enemy" (Gegner Erforschung und Bekämpfung). According to Panzinger's testimony, the Gestapo asked for the Jews of Finland to be handed over to the German authorities. According to him, too, Anthoni reacted positively to this request, as did Adolf Eichmann, who was partner to these discussions. After the war, Anthoni denied Panzinger's claims. Anthoni and Müller reached a verbal agreement, according to which the Gestapo was prepared to accept "all the foreign elements that Finland felt it was desirable to expel, since they were politically suspect." In his postwar testimony, Anthoni claimed that his position gave him the authority to "take all necessary steps to expel the unwanted elements," and pointed out that "the discussion may have included the question of bad elements among the Jews," although he denied that the discussions in Berlin included the issue of Finland's Jewish citizens.²⁹

It is feasible to assume that the "unwanted elements" and the "bad elements among the Jews" mentioned by Anthoni referred to about 300 Jews from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia who were refugees in Finland, as well as the Jewish Soviet army POWs. On other occasions the Germans raised before the Finnish

government the issue of Finland's Jews and Germany's desire to have them, but placed no pressure on the Finns. Due to Finland's special status among Germany's allies, Hitler even issued a directive forbidding any interference in Finland's internal affairs.³⁰

An expression of this special relationship was given during Hitler's visit to Finland on July 4, 1942, when he came to congratulate Marshall Mannerheim on his seventy-fifth birthday. Himmler visited Finland on July 29 and discussed the question of Finland's Jews with Prime Minister Johan Wilhelm Rangell. After the war Rangell recalled telling Himmler, "A few thousand Jews live in Finland, decent families and citizens, whose sons fight in our army as do all the other Finns, and they are citizens who are as respectable as all the others. I ended my words with, 'We have no Jewish problem' [*wir haben keine Judenfrage*]. I said this so clearly that the discussion on this issue ended forthwith. The problem of the Jews was not raised again with Himmler."³¹

A different description is given elsewhere to the answer given by the Finnish authorities to Himmler. In advance of Himmler's Finnish visit, Hitler had raised the demand for Finland's Jews to be handed over to Germany, and when Himmler repeated this demand in Finland, he received an evasive reply. He was told that the only factor able to decide on the issue was the Finnish parliament, which would be convening only in November 1942.³²

The Jews of Finland were not extradited to Germany and thus were saved. The Finnish government and the major Finnish political parties opposed handing over the country's Jews, whom they saw as citizens of the country, with all attendant rights and obligations. Indeed, between 260 and 300 members of Finland's small Jewish community served in the army as soldiers and officers and fought at the front. Dozens fell in battle.³³

Finland's determination not to hand over its Jews to the Germans referred to those Jews who were citizens of Finland. The Finnish government included persons who were pro-German, especially the Interior Minister Toivo Horelli. Such people also served in the Finnish State Police, which was subordinate to him, as well as in the Finnish army, especially in the Command of the Rear Areas, to which the POW camps were subordinated, prior to the summer of 1942. It is reasonable to assume that ideological considerations, coupled with a desire to please the Germans and their inherent inability to hand over the Finnish Jews, caused these Finnish officials to make preparations to hand over the Jewish POWs. Having fought the Finns on the side of the hated Soviet enemy, the Jewish POWs could have been seen as part of those "dangerous political elements" that the Finns delivered to the Germans. Finnish public opinion would certainly have been better able to reconcile with the extradition of POWs to Germany than the surrender of Jewish Finns or even Jewish refugees in Finland.

Nor was Finland's Jewish community able to initiate the concentration of Jewish POWs in order to help them and to improve their conditions. During the spring and summer of 1942 Finland's Jews were still in a state of uncertainty as to their own fate, and any interference on their part on behalf of Soviet POWs would have aroused doubts as to their own loyalty to their country. In an October 1944 memo to the Jewish Agency, L. Weinstein, chairman of the Committee of Jewish Communities in Finland, described the conditions under which the community was living in wartime, and went on to say of the POWs that "when the Finnish Red Cross called our attention to the fact that a large number of Jews are included in the Soviet POWs, we were able to obtain permission to send them parcels via this organization [Red Cross]." ³⁴ No mention is made in the memo of any Jewish initiative to separate them from the other POWs, nor does the memo mention any date.

The concentration of the Jewish POWs following Anthoni's visit to Berlin and in advance of Himmler's visit to Finland, and after it, coupled with the testimonies of Jewish POWs, supply a basis for the assumption that the Jewish POWs were concentrated in order to transfer them to the Germans, in the same way that the 70 prisoners defined as dangerous elements were transferred and that this had been on the initiative of the pro-German circles in the Command of the Rear Areas and the Finnish Interior Ministry. The failure to extradite the Jewish POWs to the Germans, notwithstanding the intention of those who had concentrated them, may be attributed to the intervention of Marshall Mannerheim, who appeared to have reached the conclusion in autumn 1942 that Germany was about to lose the war.

On October 1, 1942, an order was issued by Valdmarr Fabricius, who was in charge in the Finnish GHQ for the POW camps, to concentrate the Jewish POWs—with the exception of officers, political staff, medical staff treating all the POWs; tailors, cobblers, and the sick up until their recovery. According to another order, issued on the same date, to the commander of Central Camp 2, the Jewish prisoners were to be concentrated in separate huts, put to work in one place, and prevented from interacting with prisoners of other nationalities. ³⁵

The date on which these orders were issued, October 1, 1942, does not correspond with the testimonies of the Jewish POWs quoted here, according to whom the concentration was carried out in the spring and summer of 1942. It cannot be assumed that the Jewish POWs were confused with regard to the seasons of the year, and it would appear that the October orders related to a further concentration of Jewish POWs. This concentration, in autumn 1942, was probably carried out under the auspices of the Red Cross, which was already in contact with the Finnish Jewish community, and was issued in order to help the Jewish prisoners.

This help, whether direct or via the Finnish Red Cross, was possible only on the condition that the Jews were concentrated in one place, isolated from the other POWs. The testimonies of Jewish POW emphasize their improved conditions following their separation from the other POWs.

As a result of the September 19, 1944, armistice agreement between the Soviet Union and Finland, the POWs were returned to their homeland; among them were the Jewish POWs. All had been held in camps for months, where they were interrogated by the NKVD as to how they had been taken prisoner and on their activity in captivity. Many of the POWs, including the Jews, were generally sent to work in mines. Some were returned for further military service, in order—as they were told—“to atone with their blood for having fallen into captivity.”³⁶

Extermination in Ostland of Jews from the Third Reich

EXPULSION OF THE JEWS OF THE THIRD REICH

In August 1941 Hitler decided to expel all German, Austrian, and Czech Jews to the occupied Soviet territories.¹ Goebbels mentioned it in his diary when he wrote about two conversations with Hitler that month, in which Hitler spoke of the impending expulsion.² The subject was raised once again during Himmler and Heydrich's visit to Hitler's HQ September 22–24, 1941. Goebbels, who was present at the meeting, wrote on September 24 that “the Fuhrer was convinced that Germany must be rid of the Jews [*herausgebracht werden müssen*]. The first cities that must be free of Jews are Berlin, Vienna, and Prague.”³

The decision to send the Reich Jews away was part of the “Final Solution.” The timing of Hitler's decision, however, was influenced by two factors. First, it would answer the Gauleiters' demand for a solution to the housing problem in the big cities. Second, it had to be a retaliation for the Soviet deportation of the Volga Germans to Siberia and Kazakhstan, according to Stalin's August 1941 decision.⁴ Extermination camps, which could have been used as an alternative and objective for the Reich Jews, were not yet in existence in the Polish regions of the General Government. The Riga and Minsk areas would serve instead.

Overall responsibility for the deportation was entrusted to the Sipo, and Adolf Eichmann, who had organized the forced emigration of Jews from Vienna and Prague before the war, played a key role. Sipo also dealt with the deportees after their arrival in Riga and Minsk. The Orpo, in coordination with the Sipo, was put in charge of guarding the transports on the way. Orpo provided one officer and fifteen men for each transport.⁵ The Reichskommissariat Ostland was informed by Stahlecker, Sipo chief in Ostland, on November 8, 1941, of the decision to bring in 50,000 Jews—half to Riga and the other half to Minsk. In order to prepare room for the German Jews, 12,000 Jews were exterminated on November

7 in the Minsk ghetto; this was followed on November 20, 1941, by an action in which some 7,000 Jews were murdered.⁶

The first transport left Hamburg on November 8, 1941, and by the end of that month seven transports of Jews had arrived in Minsk with a total of 6,962 people. The transports to Minsk ceased at the end of November, as a result of army intervention and the need for all available rail stock to meet the needs of Army Group Center.⁷ The Soviet army had begun its winter offensive, forcing Army Group Center to withdraw and redeploy along new defense lines. On November 20, 1941, General Walter Braemer, Wehrmacht commander in Ostland, wrote to Lohse, expressing the army's objection to the deportation of Germany Jews to Belorussia.⁸

This objection on the part of the army was forwarded along other military channels, and transports of Jews from Germany to Belorussia came to a standstill. They were resumed only on May 6, 1942, when the situation with Army Groups Center had been stabilized. Twenty-five transports of Jews were sent to Minsk between November 1941 and October 1942 consisting of 23,904 people.⁹

During the second half of November, the ghetto in Riga still housed between 30,000 and 32,000 Jews when the deportations of Jews from Germany to Latvia were to commence; there was no room to accommodate Jews from Germany. In the course of two actions on November 30 and December 8–9, 1941, in which 25,000 to 28,000 Jews were murdered, space was made for the newcomers. Deportations had already begun from Germany to Riga on November 17, 1941, and in order avoid the need to postpone the designated expulsion date, the Sipo decided to direct five transports of Jews to Ninth Fort in Kaunas and murder them there. Thus, according to the Einsatzgruppen report dated January 5, 1942, "The first five transports that were to come to Riga were sent to Kaunas. The Riga camp that is to admit about 25,000 Jews is being built and will be completed very soon. In the meantime, the Higher ss Police Leader in Riga, ss-Obergruppenführer Jeckeln, started a [mass] shooting action on Sunday, November 30, 1941."¹⁰ The transports that left Germany between November 17 and 25, 1941, carrying 4,934 Jews, arrived in Kaunas. They were taken to Ninth Fort and shot by a Lithuanian Schutzmannschaft battalion.¹¹ It was the Holocaust's first act of mass murder of Reich Jews.

The sixth transport set off from Berlin on November 27 and reached Riga on November 30, while the murder action was in progress and the ghetto had not been emptied of local Jews. About 1,000 Berlin Jews were added to the Riga Jews being led to extermination and shot alongside them.¹² The killing of the Reich Jews in Kaunas and in Riga was a result of a decision by Jeckeln, as part of German extermination policy in the occupied territories of Soviet Union, and

not by direct orders from Himmler. After the execution of the Jews from the six transports, Himmler ordered that further executions of Reich Jews deported to the Ostland were to be done only according to directives given by him or by Heydrich, acting on his behalf.¹³

Subsequent transports to Riga continued between November 29, 1941, and October 1942. Twenty-five transports bearing 23,785 Reich Jews were brought to Latvia to be closed in the Riga ghetto or in labor camps. According to Browning, two of these transports, one from Theresienstadt that departed on January 15, 1942, and one from Vienna that departed on February 10, were liquidated upon their arrival.¹⁴ These further killings of Reich Jews were exceptional in their timing, but not by the very fact that they happened. The fate of all the deported Reich Jews was either death by hunger and disease or death by firing squad.

The deportees were given permission to take with them objects not exceeding 50 kilos in weight. Apart from wedding rings, they were forbidden to take any valuables, and all their remaining money and property were confiscated on behalf of the state.¹⁵ Haim Baram, who was on the transport from Berlin to Minsk, described the deportation:

On November 14, at 8:00 in the evening . . . the train started moving. . . . We don't know where we are being taken to. . . . November 18, the train stopped, Minsk is before us. . . . At about 3:00 all the doors are opened at once and a wild mob of Latvian SS burst in. . . . People, women, and children are thrown brutally out of the train . . . blows and kicks. We didn't understand what was wanted of us. . . . In the end we arrived at a special, fenced in ghetto.¹⁶

The German Jews had no idea what awaited them in Ostland, and learned of the extermination of Soviet Jews only on arrival in Minsk and Riga. According to the Einsatzgruppen report, "It was observed that some of the Jews had a totally mistaken picture about their future. Some of them imagined that they will be used to colonize the East."¹⁷

THE REICH JEWS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT BELORUSSIA

The Minsk ghetto in which the German Jews were accommodated was given the name "Hamburg ghetto," after the hometown of the first arrivals, and was kept separately from that of the local Jews. A Jewish council was appointed on the arrival of the first Reich Jews and headed by Dr. Edgar Frank. A Jewish police force was established in the ghetto, selected from among Jewish soldiers who had served in the German, Austrian, and Czech armies, most of them during World War I. Karl Löwenstein, a former World War I officer, was appointed

commander. According to Reich custom, the newcomers wore on their chests a yellow star of David with the letter *J* (*Juden*), unlike the local Jews, who wore yellow patches on their chest and back.¹⁸ The inability of the German Jews to adjust to ghetto conditions—overcrowding, hunger, terrible cold, the absence of firewood, sickness, persecution, and hard labor—resulted in a particularly high mortality rate.¹⁹

The civil administration in Belorussia was confused as to the attitude they should adopt toward the German Jews. They had no compunctions about persecuting and murdering the local Jews, but were decidedly ill at ease when faced with their Jewish countrymen. Generalkommissar Kube sent Lohse a letter on December 16, 1941, that dealt with this issue:

I wish to ask you personally for an official directive for the conduct of the civil administration toward the Jews deported from Germany to Belorussia. Among these Jews are men who fought at the front and have the Iron Cross First and Second Class, war invalids, half-Aryans, and even three-quarter Aryans. . . . These Jews will probably freeze or starve to death in the next weeks. . . . I am a hard man and willing to help solve the Jewish problem. But people who come from our own cultural sphere just are not the same as the brutish hordes in this place. Is the slaughter to be carried out by the Lithuanians and Latvians, who are themselves disgusted by the population here? I beg you to give clear directives [in this matter], with due consideration for the good name of our Reich and our Party, in order that the necessary action can be taken in the most humane way.²⁰

Kube's letter yielded no results. Like their local counterparts, the Reich Jews were forced into hard labor, treated cruelly, and in some cases executed—all according to the mood of the Germans in charge of them. Some places employed local and the Reich Jews, but the lack of a common language allowed little interaction between them.

In order to avoid dying of starvation, the Reich Jews tried to exchange the few possessions or valuables they had managed to bring with them for food. Local non-Jews would come to the fence with foodstuffs and return to their homes with clothes, bed sheets, rings, wrist watches, and other prizes. In the absence of a common language, the local Jews acted as mediators in the bartering between Reich Jews and the gentile population, in return for a cut of the profits.²¹ But neither the bartering nor work outside the ghetto succeeded in staving off the hunger and the high mortality rate inside the ghetto.

On February 8, 1942, the eight Hamburg ghetto Jewish council members, including their chairman, Dr. Frank, were arrested and accused of using a German

policeman to smuggle letters to Hamburg. For a whole month no one knew what had happened to the Jewish council. Then, on March 8, Dr. Frank was returned to the ghetto, weak and beaten. He died that night. The seven remaining members of the Jewish council were returned to the ghetto on April 13 and shot on the spot. Erich Harf was appointed chairman of the new Jewish council.²²

In Ratomska Street in Minsk, some 5,000 local Jews were shot on March 2 and 3, 1942. The Jews of the Hamburg ghetto were unhurt in this action.²³ Notwithstanding the horror of seeing thousands of fellow Jews being led to their slaughter on March 2, the fact that the Reich Jews were unhurt in this action led them to believe that their fate would be different from that of the local Jews. This delusion also caused them—whether consciously or not—to avoid forming relationships with the local ghetto, thus emphasizing the differences between them and the local Jews.

The hopes and delusions of the Reich Jews were shattered on July 28 and 31, 1942, when the Germans carried out a killing operation that took in both ghettos. On the morning of July 28, when groups of Jews had left as usual on their way to work, German soldiers and local police forces surrounded the Hamburg ghetto and ordered people out of their homes. They were loaded onto trucks, taken to Malyi-Trostiniets, and murdered. In this action, the Germans also used gas vans. The people who had gone to work that morning were held for four days before being allowed to return to the ghetto, only to find that most of their families had been murdered.²⁴ According to Kube's report to Lohse dated July 31, 1942, some 3,500 Reich Jews had been murdered in this action; in Minsk there remained 2,600 Reich Jews.²⁵

Transports resumed on May 6, 1942, and by October eighteen transports of Jews from the Reich had arrived in the Minsk area, bringing some 17,000 Jews. All but one of the transports did not reach the Minsk ghetto but were taken directly to be murdered in Malyi-Trostiniets. The one transport not to be taken to Malyi-Trostiniets left Theresienstadt on July 28 and arrived in Baranovichi. The 1,000 Jews on the transport were loaded onto trucks and taken to a forest near Baranovichi, where they were shot. This transport was diverted to Baranovichi because a murder action was taking place at the same time (July 28–30, 1941) in the Minsk ghetto, which made it impossible for the local Sipo to receive it.²⁶ At his trial in Germany, Oberführer Hauser, who was in direct command of the murders in Malyi-Trostiniets, described the killings there:

In September and October 1942 I took part in actions against three transports of Jews from the west. . . . In one of them, I was in command of the shooting unit next to the pit. . . . In the second action in September, I was in charge of the disembarking from the train station, but I also took part in shooting

by the pit. I was also present at an action using gas vans. In the third action [October 1942], there was another transport of Jews from Germany. Then, too, I carried out shooting. . . . I always drank my beer.²⁷

The Reich Jews remaining in Minsk were crowded into a much-reduced ghetto, alongside the one containing the local Jews. On September 1, 1943, the ghetto was surrounded and the inhabitants were ordered to gather in a specific place. Then 250 men, between the ages of 16 and 30, were picked out of the crowd and taken to the ss camp in Shiroka Street. Together with some local Jews, they were sent to the forced labor camp at Budzyn, southwest of Lublin, in the General Government. When the Soviet army approached the area during the early months of 1944, the camp was evacuated and the remaining Reich Jews were sent to camps in Germany. A mere handful of them lived to see the day of liberation.²⁸

The Reich Jews who remained in the Minsk ghetto were murdered along with the last of the local Jews in October 1943. There still remained several dozen German Jews in the Malyi-Trostinets camp. In early July 1944, when the Soviet army was close, the ss locked their Jewish prisoners in a hut and set fire to it. Only a few managed to escape the burning hut and survive.²⁹

THE REICH JEWS IN GENERALKOMMISSARIAT LATVIA

The first four transports with about 3,900 Jews from the Reich that arrived between December 1 and 10, 1941, disembarked at Riga's Skirotava railway station and were sent to the agricultural farm Jungfernhof (Jumpravnuiza in Latvian), near Riga. Hundreds of them, physically fit youngsters, were sent to build camp Salaspils, about 18 kilometers away from Riga.

The first transport to enter ghetto Riga, which had been emptied of its earlier inhabitants, had set off from the German city of Cologne on December 8, 1941. By February 10, 1942, fourteen more transports had arrived in Riga, and the number of people sent to the ghetto stood at 14,300. The large ghetto, into which the Reich Jews were closed, was known as the "German ghetto," and it was kept separate from the small ghetto, which was populated by about 4,000 Riga Jews. Passage between the two ghettos was possible only by special permit issued by the German authorities.

A Jewish council for the German ghetto was appointed by the German authorities. Its head was Max Leizer from Cologne. The Jewish ghetto police unit was headed by Frankenberg. In Riga ghetto, too, the Reich Jews wore a yellow Star of David with the letter *J* on their chest only—unlike the yellow patches that the local Jews wore on their chest and back.

The ghetto was subordinated to the Sipo, under the command of Obersturmführer Kurt Krause. In a public address to the first transport of Cologne Jews, Krause said that they “had been sent to Riga to work on behalf of the war effort,” and he pointed out that, as German speakers, “they are a preferred substitute to the Jews of Riga.”³⁰ Reich Jews who were placed in houses previously inhabited by local—murdered—Jews, found leftovers from the former inhabitants: cooking utensils and dishes, clothing, and, here and there, frozen corpses. They knew that the previous inhabitants had been murdered, but they still believed that their own fate would differ from that of the “Ostjuden.” According to Gertrude Schneider, who had come to Riga on a transport from Vienna, “The Jews from Germany . . . did not expect the same fate. . . . Thus, after recovering from the first shock at the sights of death and bloodshed, they believed that what had happened to the Latvian Jews could not happen to them.”³¹

Conditions in the Ghetto were harsh, similar to those in the Hamburg ghetto in Minsk. There was a severe shortage of food, and people were forced to do hard physical labor. Early in February 1942, the Germans picked out and murdered hundreds of people who were no longer capable of physical labor. The February 6 transport from Vienna underwent a selection on their arrival at the Skirotava railway station, and 700 of them—whom the Germans considered unfit for work—were murdered in gas vans. Only about 300 people on this transport arrived at the ghetto. About 1,500 Reich Jews were murdered in February 1942. Between March 13 and 15, 1,900 people were taken from the German ghetto in Riga and 1,840 from camp Jungefernhof and murdered in the Bikernieku forest. The Latvian Sonderkommando Arajs participated in these murder actions.³²

After March 1942, of about 19,000 Jews deported from Germany to Latvia, 9,000 lived in the Riga ghetto, 1,500 in Salaspils, and 450 in Jungfernhof. Gertrude Schneider wrote about the mood of the Reich Jews after the March killings:

There was amply evidence that the Jewish deportees from Germany had no cause to consider themselves exempted from the fate that had befallen their fellow Jews in the Latvian ghetto. But even then, there were those who kept pointing out that “only” the old, the infirm, and children were being singled out for extermination, and that the strong, healthy individuals, like themselves, would be safe from harm, perhaps not because they were German, but because their work was important to the war effort.³³

Following the March killings, life in the ghetto focused on work and the war on hunger. In order to fight starvation, in Riga, as in Minsk, the Jews bartered

the objects they had brought with them from Germany in exchange for food. The middlemen were those people who had outside employment, and these also smuggled food into the ghetto.

In Riga, too, the ties between the local Jews and the Reich Jews were tenuous, although here the cultural differences between the two groups were less noticeable than in Minsk. One factor that lay heavily on relations between the two Riga ghettos resulted from the late November and early December 1941 murder actions. According to Gertrude Schneider, "For a long time, the Latvian Jews who had survived the slaughter believed that their own families had been murdered simply so that there would be room in the ghetto area to accommodate the Jewish deportees from the Reich. . . . The massacre became a wedge driving the two groups even further apart."³⁴ This bitterness faded with time, and the murders of February and March 1942, in which Reich Jews perished, proved to the local Jews that no one was safe.

Since the local Jews in the small ghetto enjoyed better food rations than their brethren, both because all of them were in employment and because they still had possessions to barter and could speak the local language, they did their best to help their Reich counterparts, especially the children. As Schneider wrote: "It is to the eternal credit of the surviving Latvian Jews that, despite of their feelings of resentment, they helped the newcomers from the Reich over the hurdles of cold and hunger: it was they who smuggled milk into the ghetto for the children of the German Jews, children who for the time being were permitted to live."³⁵

After a six-month pause, the deportation of Reich Jews to the Riga area resumed in August 1942. Between August 15 and the end of October, five or six transports were sent in the direction of Riga. Two or more of these passed through Riga and arrived in Estonia in September 1942, one from Theresienstadt and the other from Frankfurt, each consisting of around 1,000 Jews. The trains stopped at the Raasiku railway station, some 50 kilometers from Tallinn, where the Jews underwent selection. About 150 people who were fit for work, half of them women, were removed from each of the transports and sent to the Jagala concentration camp. The others were placed in trucks and driven to Kalevi-Liiva, where they were shot.

About 2,000 people—adults with their children, old and sick people—were removed from the German ghetto in Riga on November 2, 1943, and deported to Auschwitz. The Riga ghetto was closed, and anyone left behind who was fit to work was sent to camps. As the Soviet army advanced in August and September 1944, the few thousand remaining Reich Jews in Riga were deported to Shtuthof and, from there, to different camps in Germany. Many of them died in the death

marches. Of the thousands of Reich Jews deported to Latvia, between 600 and 800 survived the war.³⁶

The Reich Jews who were deported to Minsk and Riga believed naively that they were being taken to settle and work in far-off regions of eastern Europe. In the ghettos and camps of Minsk and Riga they faced the cruel realization that Nazi Germany's policies of extermination were directed not only against the Ostjuden but also against them.

EIGHT

The Robbery of Jewish
Property and Cultural Values

30

Confiscation and Plunder

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOVIET JEWISH PROPERTY

At the same time that the Jews were being systematically annihilated, a planned robbery of Jewish property was taking place throughout the regions under German occupation. In the occupied Soviet territories, the methods used in carrying out the robbery, as well as the mass murder, differed from those used in other occupied European countries. These were characteristically:

The murder of Jews was carried out in the vicinity of their homes, rather than in distant extermination camps, so that all their property, valuables, and money remained in the possession of the local German authorities.

The nature of “property” owned by individuals in a communist country was different from that in the hands of individuals in other German-occupied countries in Europe. Such property was usually limited, since the communist authorities had confiscated most things of economic value in the years following the revolution, such as plants, workshops, large buildings, land, banks, and other kinds of privately owned property. Jewish public property met the same fate: schools, synagogues, hospitals, and cultural institutions were confiscated. A Jew—or any other Soviet citizen—was allowed to own an apartment (mostly a small one), household goods, clothes and personal belongings, some money, and valuables. Such was the character of Jewish property in the old territories of the Soviet Union.

In the territories annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40, Jewish property was somewhat different. The majority of this Jewish community had belonged to the middle and working classes, and only a very few were wealthy. From the very beginning, the Soviet authorities in these areas nationalized the banks, plants, and businesses, as well as large houses, and all Jewish and non-Jewish public property. Apartments and their contents usually remained in the hands of their owners, unless these were defined as elements hostile to the Soviet regime, and

the owners were arrested and exiled to the remote areas of the Soviet Union.¹ Still, because of the brief period in which the Soviets governed the annexed territories by the time of the German invasion, more property and valuables remained in the hands of the Jews of these territories than of the Jews in the old territories. But in spite of the limited amount of property in the possession of the individual citizen, because of the large Jewish population in the occupied Soviet territories, the total value of property in their possession was very high.

GERMANY'S SYSTEM FOR ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND ORDERS REGARDING JEWISH PROPERTY

Economic Staff East (*Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost*) had branches in each of the German Army Groups, down to the *Wirtschaftskommandos* at the level of *Feldkommandanturen*. It was responsible for the economic exploitation of the regions under military administration.² In the areas under civil administration, these responsibilities were placed in the hands of the *Reichskommissariat* and the administrative bodies subordinate to it. Within their overall responsibilities, these bodies considered themselves as having sole authority over Jewish property and the use of it. Nonetheless, the *Einsatzgruppen* also saw themselves as the supreme authority in everything concerning the Jews, including their property; this produced fertile soil for disagreements between the various German authorities.

The orders issued by the German authorities in the occupied Soviet territories aimed at the immediate confiscation of Jewish property, including any money and valuables in their possession. And thus, according to a memo sent by the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories, "It is imperative to seize and confiscate all the property belonging to the Jews, except for that which is necessary for their existence. They must be stripped as quickly as possible of their property . . . in order to stop as soon as possible the transfer of property [to other hands]."³

According to the orders issued on August 13, 1941, by Ostland Reichskommissar Lohse, all property belonging to Jews was to be confiscated and registered, and they must hand over immediately all the money in their possession, whether in local or foreign currency, as well as all the valuables in their possession: gold, diamonds, and other precious metals.⁴ These orders were not sufficiently clear on the matter of Jewish property, so that, on October 13, 1941, Lohse issued a detailed order, according to which:

All the property in the possession of the Jews, goods and real estate, is to be confiscated. . . . The confiscation is to be carried out by the Reichskommissar of Ostland or the offices authorized by him. . . . The following are not included in the confiscation: the small household appliances used for basic needs and

cash up to the value of 100 Reichsmarks. . . . Imprisonment or a fine will be the punishment for anyone who tries to hide from the German civil administration any object . . . and on anyone who does not fulfill his duty to report or to inform on Jewish property according to this order, whether out of intent or out of negligence. If the accused acted out of resistance motives . . . he will be subject to a death penalty.⁵

A serious problem facing the German administration was that of obtaining information on Jewish property, especially on the many thousands of apartments and their contents, which had been taken over mainly by local police and municipality personnel, or non-Jewish neighbors. The local administrations—mayors and village leaders—were entrusted with registering this property. In an October 1941 order issued by Dr. Walter Alnor, the Gebietskommissar of the Latvian district of Liepaja, the municipal and village leaders were made responsible for preserving and registering Jewish property and passing all the lists to him. In order to encourage their cooperation, Dr. Alnor added, “I agree that the poor and needy and those worthy of it, should be given less valuable domestic objects, in return for token payment.”⁶

The Jews’ property, as well as their labor, provided a source for financing the civil administration, in whose interest it was to ensure that income from this property continued to flow into its coffers. In August 1942 Lohse handed over responsibility for Jewish affairs to Dr. Karl Friedrich Vialon, head of the finance department at Reichskommissariat Ostland.⁷ Vialon issued an order on August 27 to the Generalkommissars, according to which:

Gold and silver objects have to be confiscated and carefully cataloged, then sent to the Reich’s credit coffer [*Reichskreditkasse*] in Riga and placed at my disposal. . . . Their transfer to the bureau for realization [of valuables, *Verwertungsstelle*] in Berlin will be carried out from Riga. . . . Fabrics that were not handed over to the supply department [*Beschaffungsabteilungen*] will be passed on to the local offices of the Eastern Fiber Co. Ltd. [Ostlandfaser GmbH]. If goods are sold, the money for them is to be transferred immediately to the special account of the Reichskommissariat Financial Department.⁸

Vialon’s order was aimed at ensuring that no monies from Jewish property remained in the hands of the Generalkommissariat in Minsk, Kaunas and Riga, but transferred to the coffers of the Reichskommissariat.

Problems connected with the acquisition of Jewish property continued to occupy the civil administration in the occupied Soviet territories. On September 7, 1942, the Ministry for Eastern Territories published a document dealing with the issue of confiscating and ways of selling off Jewish property, Soviet gov-

ernment property and ownerless property. The documents stated that German institutions which were not part of the civil administration were obliged to report to the Reichskommissars on the property in their possession. Precious metals and gems (gold, silver, diamonds, etc.) were, according to this document, to be transferred to Berlin, to the Institution for Realizing Precious Metals (*Verwertung von Edelmetallen*). Furniture of all kinds and household goods would be used by various offices in the administration, while clothes, fabrics etc. would be sold on the spot. Any remuneration received for the sale of precious metals was to be transferred to the coffers of the Ministry for Eastern Territories.⁹ Throughout their occupation of the Soviet territories, the German civil administration met with difficulties in collecting and registering Jewish property, especially with the property requisitioned by the army or the ss.

Lohse issued an order on October 14, 1942, in which he stated that all property and monies demanded by Jews from a third party were also considered as confiscated on behalf of the civil administration and anyone owing money to Jews was required to report the fact. Moreover, Lohse announced in this order that all local and German institutions in the possession of Jewish property or who were located in Jewish-owned buildings, must be registered as such.¹⁰

The confiscation of Jewish property in Reichskommissariat Ukraine, met with the same problems as in Reichskommissariat Ostland. German documentation of Jewish property in Reichskommissariat Ukraine, as of other matters concerning the Holocaust, is very limited in comparison with documentation in Ostland. Raul Hilberg wrote about one of the issues concerning Jewish property in the Ukraine:

On September 7, 1942, Koch received a directive from the Ministry for the Eastern Territories, to seize all Jewish property and other property that has remained without owners. . . . Koch replied . . . that he has already confiscated from the Jews, their valuables and gold. The remaining Jewish property consists mainly of furniture, some of which is in use in his offices, and the remainder was burned. . . . The proposal to call in debts owing to Jews is impractical and impossible to implement in times of war.¹¹

In the areas under military administration, too, there were problems when other German authorities or local inhabitants took over property previously belonging to Jews or to the Soviet administration. In an order dated October 10, 1941, Max von Schenckendorff, commander of Army Group Center rear areas, wrote, "It is stressed yet again that all matters pertaining to the confiscation or other orders concerning property of all kinds, whether relating to the [property belonging to the] Jews or the [property belonging to the] enemy, . . . come under the sole responsibility of Economic Staff East."¹²

ROBBERY OF JEWISH PROPERTY

One of the first methods used by the Germans to despoil the Jews of their money and valuables was given the name “contributions.” In many places, the German authorities, both military and civil, forced the Jewish councils to collect a levy of money and valuables over an extremely short time and hand it over to the authorities. The Jews coined these levies “contributions.” The first objective of the “contributions” was to serve the German administration as a primary and immediate source of income for their local needs; the second was to impoverish the Jews. Some of the confiscated funds, which were not recorded and for which no receipt was given, found their way into the private pockets of the usurpers. This is especially true of gold and valuables, which were an integral part of the contributions. A typical example is the contribution imposed on the Jews of Vilnius.

On August 6, 1941, the man in charge of the Jewish matters in the Vilnius Gebietskommissariat, Franz Mürer, summoned representatives of the Jewish council and informed them that by nine o'clock the following morning they were to hand over to him a sum of 2 million rubles, or the equivalent weight in gold, and a further 3 million rubles by the end of the day. He stressed that in the event of the Jewish council representatives turning up at the designated time without the requisite sum, the remaining members of the Jewish council would have to come an hour later to collect their corpses. By the following morning 667,000 rubles had been collected, together with half a kilogram of gold, watches, and diamonds, and handed over to Mürer, who was also informed that the rest of the money was being collected. Two of the three Jewish council members who had delivered the money were arrested and threatened. After an additional meeting with representatives of the Jewish council, Mürer agreed to postpone by a few days the delivery of the required balance, and he released the detained members. In the end, Mürer received 1,490,000 rubles, 16.5 kilograms of gold, and 189 watches. No receipts were issued.¹³ The way in which the funds were delivered—during meetings in the street—without records or receipts, leaves no doubt that some of it found its way into the private pockets of administrative personnel.

On July 18, the military administration in Baranovichi ordered the Jewish council to collect five kilograms of gold from the Jews, ten kilograms of silver, and 1 million rubles; the civil administration, which took possession of the town in August, imposed on the Jewish council to collect a further 2 million rubles on its own behalf.¹⁴ The Jews of Pinsk were required to hand over 20 kilograms of gold, and those of Rovno had to pay 12 million rubles.¹⁵ The Jews of Lvov were forced to pay 20 million rubles.¹⁶ The Jews of Minsk were ordered to pay

the municipality 300,000 rubles, ostensibly to cover the cost of closing down the ghetto.¹⁷ In the eastern Belorussian town of Borisov, the Jews were forced to hand over to the administration a sum of 300,000 rubles. In Dnepropetrovsk, the Jews had to pay millions of rubles in fines.¹⁸ In Kharkov the Jews had to pay several contributions, each one larger than its predecessor.¹⁹ Similar contributions were imposed on Jews in many localities in the occupied Soviet territories.

Although the military and civil administrations considered themselves exclusively responsible for every aspect of Jewish property in the area under their jurisdiction, the fact is that all the German authorities active in the region appropriated from the Jews, or demanded from them—at times via the Jewish councils—various kinds of objects for their own uses. Knowing that the continued existence of the Jews depended on the goodwill of these authorities, the Jewish councils were forced to cooperate and hand over what was demanded of them. In a unique document on this matter, the Jewish council in Brest-Litovsk listed the institutions that demanded and received various items of Jewish property and detailed these items and their value. The document, which was in German and titled “Data on the Activity of the Jewish Council in Brest Litovsk on Behalf of German Institutions from October 5, 1941, to February 10, 1942,” listed German institutions that received these items: Generalkommissariat, Gebietskommissariat, Stadtkommissariat, the ss, the army, Kreis-Landwirtschaft (regional agricultural authority), Arbeitsamt (labor exchange), and others (probably the local municipality, local police, etc.). The goods transferred to those institutions included 115 items, each of which was listed in the document. The total value was assessed at 293,560 German marks, or 2.935 million rubles.²⁰ The Jews of Brest-Litovsk had been divested of their money already at the start of the occupation, when they paid a contribution of 5 million rubles. The document did not include the apartments and their contents left by the city’s Jews when they were forced into the ghetto, nor the property left by the Jews when the ghetto was liquidated and its occupants were murdered.

Money and valuables confiscated from the Jews in Ostland were transferred to the coffers of the Generalkommissariat in Riga. Several sources provide details of this. The Gebietskommissar of Vilnius informed the Reichskommissariat in Riga on December 17, 1942, that it had collected 1,200 gold objects, including 516 wedding rings and 150 gold rubles as well as dollars and foreign currency in notes.²¹ In June and July 1942 the Glubokoe Gebietskommissar, Petersen, handed over to the Generalkommissar of Belorussia seven kilograms and 336 grams of gold, 20 gold rubles, and 210 gold dollar coins.²²

Following the annexation of Lvov to the General Government, German business owners got permission from the local German authorities to evict Jews

and to confiscate their apartments and all their contents. In his diary Professor Mauricio Allerhand of Lvov University wrote:

On August 6, 1941, a certain gentleman appeared in my room. . . . He read the following words from a note that he held in his hand: "The apartment is confiscated. You are allowed to take only over- and underclothes, gold and silver objects. Everything else has to be left. . . ." This gentleman was the manager of the Viennese company Kompos. . . . My apartment contained a library, consisting of several thousand volumes . . . a large number of extremely valuable works. . . . There were in my apartment the following pictures [there follows a list detailing dozens of paintings, including the names of the artists].²³

The robbery of their property continued even after the Jews were closed in ghettos. In Kaunas, German and Lithuanian police teams conducted house-to-house searches in the ghetto. The searches started on August 19, 1941, and continued for two weeks, during which the police confiscated money, gold and silver pieces, quality clothing, and anything else that appealed to them. Leib Garfunkel witnessed the house searches:

The Germans forced the women of the house into one room, forced them to undress completely, and examined them to ensure they had not hidden anything inside their bodies. . . . During the final days of the searches, the soldiers were not satisfied with beatings, but every day they would murder a few Jews who supposedly had hidden something. . . . On September 6, the "Altsternat" received a demand from Jordan to send him a few representatives. Jordan was furious. . . . For every object of value found on a Jew [he told them], he will be shot on the spot together with another hundred of his neighbors. . . . The following day, the Jews rushed in their thousands to get rid of their belongings. . . . Every day Germans from the local administration came, carrying large suitcases. They filled the suitcases with Jewish property.²⁴

Events in Lvov, Kaunas and many other ghettos could be defined as "officially sanctioned robbery," carried out by the authorities. But at the same time acts of "private robbery" were being carried out in the ghettos, with local policemen and German soldiers entering the ghetto at night and looting anything they liked. Hersch Smolar wrote about events in the Minsk ghetto: "Worst of all were the night raids. . . . Small groups of German soldiers—looters, began paying frequent visits to the ghetto. They would burst into the houses, make a thorough search, and snatch everything they could."²⁵

In the short-lived ghetto in Kharkov it is said that "acts of robbery and murder became a daily occurrence. The Germans would usually burst into rooms under

the excuse that they were searching for weapons, and steal everything that caught their eye. People who resisted were taken outside and shot.”²⁶

The municipal authorities, too, made use of Jewish property to fund their activity. On September 27, 1941, the mayor of Kiev, V. Bagazii, published an announcement to the city’s population with regard to Jewish property and ownerless property, saying that by December 16, 1941, all the city’s inhabitants were obliged to report in writing on all such property. In this report they were to specify which of these items they were interested in purchasing. A special committee would evaluate the objects on behalf of the municipality and the inhabitants were to pay the municipality for them. The announcement stressed that anyone not reporting on property in his possession would be punished. Any property that the locals had no desire to purchase was to be returned to the municipality. A municipal committee was also entrusted with evaluating the prices of objects returned by local inhabitants, prior to selling them at public auction.²⁷

The money and valuables belonging to the Jews who were murdered in the areas under military administration were used by the administration to fund its activity. According to procedure, the money was used by the military administration, while the valuables were transferred to the Reich’s central bank in Berlin; the cash value of the objects was then transferred to the administration. Major Paul Aik, special tasks officer in the Feldkommandatur in the Belorussian town of Orsha, gave this testimony at his trial: “The cash remained . . . to be used for running municipal matters. . . . The municipality had no other financial means. . . . I was ordered to send the gold, silver, and other valuables to Berlin, to be credited to the town of Orsha. . . . The municipality could then receive their cash value at the bank in Minsk.”²⁸

In many places when Jews were ordered to gather at certain places for “resettlement,” a euphemism for being taken to the murder pits, they were instructed to take with them all the money and valuables in their possession, since they would need these in their new homes. At those gathering places, where they were still unaware of what awaited them, the Jews were ordered to hand over all their money and valuables; anyone who refused would be shot and not taken for “resettlement.”²⁹ Some of the money and property taken from the Jews during the murder actions did not reach the military or civil administrations, but remained in the possession of the Einsatzgruppen, who carried out the murders. These usually handed over these goods to the RSHA in Berlin. But sometimes — especially in the early days of the occupation — they handed the booty over to the Reich Main Bureau for Spoils of War (Reichshauptkasse Beutestelle), as was habitually done at the time by military units and the military administration.³⁰ According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated October 26, 1941, “The total sum so far secured

by Einsatzkommando 8 . . . amounts to 2,019,521 rubles.” Other reports referred to confiscations of tens and even hundreds of thousands of rubles.³¹

The possessions left behind by the victims at the murder sites and sometimes in their apartments, too, were usually taken by the Einsatzgruppen for distribution among the ethnic Germans who lived in the Soviet Union. Responsibility for these Volksdeutsche was in the hands of Himmler and the relevant department in SS HQ (Vomi-Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle). The Einsatzgruppen report dated October 7, 1941, described the murder of Jews in Kiev and Zhitomir: “Kiev . . . Gold and valuables, linen, and clothing were secured. Part of it was given to the NSV [National-Sozialistische Versorgung—Nazi Welfare] for the ethnic Germans, and part to the city administration for distribution among the needy population. . . . Zhitomir . . . About 25–30 tons of linen, clothing, shoes, dishes, etc., that had been confiscated in the action were handed over to the officials of the NSV in Zhitomir for distribution.”³²

The money and valuables taken by the Einsatzgruppen were only part of what the victims left behind. Much of it remained in the hands of the Einsatzgruppen and the German and local police. For many local policemen, the incentive to volunteer for service was to get their hands on Jewish property. Even the most senior German commanders had no compunctions about appropriating money from their Jewish victims for their personal use. A committee appointed by the Reich Bureau for Budget Control (Reichsrechnungshof) found money and valuables in the offices of Hauptsturmführer Hans Krüger, Sipo commander in the Stanislav district. And thus, according to the committee’s report:

A search of the offices of the administration clerk, police secretary B, revealed . . . large sums in cash, including gold coins and a selection of foreign currency—among others, \$6,000—as well as boxes full of valuable jewelry, which had not been confiscated according to the law and was not registered. . . . The people of the Bureau for Budget Control recorded all that was found, to avoid further disappearance of property. . . . The reference here is to several hundred thousand marks.³³

THE STRUGGLE FOR JEWISH PROPERTY

Thousands of apartments and their contents remained vacant after the deportation and murder of their Jewish owners. Some of the apartments were used to accommodate German administration staff and military personnel; some were requisitioned by the police and local administration and their associates, and some were invaded by local inhabitants. In the townships and villages, where the administration was represented only by the local mayor, the village head, and the

local police, these acquired for themselves the apartments and property of the Jews, even before they were taken off to be murdered. There were people among the local population who grew rich on the Jewish property they stole. The most appropriate time for such acts of robbery was as the Jews were forced into ghettos or when they were being led to the murder pits. According to an article on events in Berdichev during the murder action of September 14–15, 1941:

Policemen, members of their families, and the mistresses of German soldiers rushed to loot the vacant apartments. Before the eyes of the living dead, the looters carried off scarves, pillows, feather mattresses. Some walked past the guards and took scarves and knitted woolen sweaters from women and girls who were awaiting their death.³⁴

A November 1941 report on the activity of the 454 Security Division in the Ukraine included a clause that dealt with the population: “The locals became rich illegally from the property of Jews and, due to their profits from the sale or the barter of these goods, they can [now] exist without having to work.”³⁵ The German military or civil administrations, acted to prevent the locals from taking over the vacated Jewish apartments, because they planned to sell them off. Thus, in a report presented to the mayor of Mogilev in eastern Belorussia: “November 20–21, 1941. In accordance with directions from Mayor Felitskin, a committee comprised of the town engineer . . . estimated the value of the houses formerly owned by Jews. . . . These were offered for sale to the Russian inhabitants of Mogilev.”³⁶

The report continued with a table naming each local inhabitant to provide details of an apartment he wished to purchase: its address and the name of the apartment’s former Jewish owner, the apartment’s condition and an estimate of its current market value. According to partial lists at our disposal, above 300 Jewish homes were sold to local inhabitants in Mogilev between February and April 1942, all with the approval of the military administration.³⁷ The paper, *Nova Ukraina*, published in Kharkov during the German occupation, reported that 1,700 Ukrainian families received new apartments in December 1941.³⁸ The apartments had formerly belonged to Jews. The mayor of Odessa, Herman Pintia, issued a directive on January 13, 1942, forbidding the entry of local inhabitants into empty Jewish homes.³⁹ In this directive the mayor intended to reserve the apartments for members of the Romanian administration and also to sell some of them off and enjoy the profits.

There was a constant struggle between the civil administration, the army, and the Sipo over the Jewish property in their possession. The Gebietskommissar of Valmiera (in Latvia) reported on events in October 1941, that “we had special

trouble returning objects taken during the extensive confiscations by the army and the Sipo. The army is refusing to return the items. . . . The Sipo is convinced that the items confiscated belong to it. . . . I must point out that such behavior on the part of the Sipo is insufferable.”⁴⁰

In the occupied territories, the ss had at its disposal warehouses in which they stored Jewish property. Richard Dannler, a member of the ss serving in Riga under Higher ss and Police Leader Friedrich Jeckeln, testified: “In the large warehouse in Riga I saw huge piles of clothes, some blood-soaked. I reckon that these were the clothes of at least 30,000 people. . . . In the offices of the Higher ss and Police Leader I saw boxes. . . . There were large quantities of diamonds, jewelry, and gold watches, the finest of which Jeckeln chose for himself.”⁴¹

The debate over authority for dealing with confiscated Jewish property and to which of the German authorities active in the areas it belonged reached Berlin, where it was determined in discussions between Rosenberg and Himmler in favor of the civil administration. In a directive issued on March 3, 1942, to the Higher ss and Police Leaders in the occupied Soviet territories, Himmler said: “Gold, silver, and other valuables confiscated in the course of house searches or during evacuation of the Jews . . . will be transferred once a month to the relevant Reichskommissariat finance department.” Himmler’s orders were not carried out in full, and the disagreements continued. On November 26, 1942, the RSHA issued an order that all Jewish property in the hands of the Sipo was to be transferred to the finance department of the Ostland and Ukraine Reichskommissariats, with the exception of precious metals and jewels and foreign currency, which had to be transferred to the WVHA in Berlin. On May 1, 1943, the Sipo commander in Ostland reported to Lohse that “the money confiscated by the Sipo in Ostland is now being transferred to the Generalkommissariat . . . 1,000,000 Reichsmarks has already been transferred by the Sipo in Latvia. As for the transfer of 1,800,000 Reichsmarks from confiscated Jewish property, an order was given on April 22, 1943, to deposit it in the bank.”⁴²

A report published on June 30, 1943, by Gruppenführer Fritz Katzmann, ss and Police Leader in eastern Galicia provides an idea of the value of the confiscated Jewish property. The report describes the way in which the final solution was carried out in District Galicia and includes a detailed account of the Jewish property confiscated and transferred to the HQ of Operation Reinhard. The report provides details of various gold items with a total weight of 206 kilograms and 586 grams that were passed on to the HQ. It also gives detailed accounts of various silver items, with a total weight of over 5,400 kilograms. A list of the foreign currency includes twenty-nine kinds of currency (dollars, pounds sterling, zlotys, rubles, etc.). Also described in the report are the 36 train carriages

in which furs were transferred as part of the December 1941 “fur action.”⁴³ This report gives details only of the property that reached Reinhard’s HQ, and not the items and money that remained in the pockets of the local administration and the local population, which might have been greater in quantity than that which was transferred. Nor did it include the money and valuables taken by the Jewish deportees from District Galicia to Belzec and left there.

It is impossible to evaluate the exact worth of the property robbed from the Jews in the occupied Soviet territories and distributed or taken by the various groups and bodies described herein. But it can be assumed that the value of this property, which included money and valuables, vast quantities of household goods, and thousands of houses and apartments, would have totaled millions (if not billions) of Reichsmarks.

The Pillage of Cultural Assets

EINSATZTAB REICHSLEITER ROSENBERG

A special unit, Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (henceforth Special Staff Rosenberg), was put into operation in the occupied Soviet territories, with the objective of confiscating the cultural and artistic assets owned by the Soviet states and their various institutions, and all Jewish-owned assets, whether privately or publicly owned. The unit was responsible for cataloging the confiscated assets and sending them to Germany. Special Staff Rosenberg was headed by Alfred Rosenberg, not in his capacity as minister for the Eastern Territories, but as “supervisor for the ideological education of the Nazi Party,” within the framework of which he planned to establish a Nazi Party College.¹ The college was to encompass several institutions, including the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question (Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage), which was established in Frankfurt on April 19, 1939, and the Central Library (Zentral-Bibliothek) in Berlin.

In an order issued by Hermann Göring on May 1, 1941, the authority of Special Staff Rosenberg was extended to include confiscation of all necessary research material and cultural assets from all territories occupied by Nazi Germany.² Under this order and authority, Special Staff Rosenberg teams operated in the occupied Soviet territories.

Special Staff Rosenberg was not the only one collecting archival material and Jewish art in the occupied Soviet territories; Sonderkommando Kunsberg was a special unit belonging to the German Foreign Ministry that moved in the wake of the army with the objective of taking control of archives belonging to the foreign embassies that had been active in Soviet Union, as well as archives belonging to the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. Sonderkommando Kunsberg became part of Waffen-SS on August 1, 1941, with the consent of the Foreign Ministry. Teams belonging to Sonderkommando Kunsberg arrived in the occupied Soviet territories before the arrival of teams

from Special Staff Rosenberg, and everything they seized, including works of art, was sent immediately to Berlin.³

In 1940, the RSHA established a central library for “the study and analysis of worldviews” (*weltanschauliche Forschung und Auswertung*), and in order to handle Jewish literature and sources, 25 Jews were held prisoner in this library. Books were brought to the library, as well as manuscripts and other written material from the occupied European countries, including the occupied Soviet territories. The purpose of the library was to supply the needs of the struggle against enemies of the Reich, principally the Jews—the mission entrusted to the RSHA. By mid-1943, some 500,000 books were ensconced in the library.⁴ Units belonging to the Wehrmacht and other bodies also participated in the robbery of works of art and culture.⁵

On August 20, 1941, Rosenberg ordered Lohse to prevent anyone other than the Special Staff Rosenberg teams from confiscating artistic and cultural assets.⁶ Rosenberg asked the OKH for permission for teams of Special Staff Rosenberg to act within the jurisdiction of the military administration. General Wagner, who headed the military administration, published an order on October 25, 1941, stressing that teams belonging to Special Staff Rosenberg would be operating in the regions under military rule; on the Jewish issue he said that “the task of the Special Staff Rosenberg was . . . to confiscate and to send to Germany all cultural works in the ownership of Jews, of Jewish organizations or belonging to the Freemasons.”⁷

On October 16, 1941, Rosenberg wrote to Hitler asking for authorization for Special Staff Rosenberg to operate in the occupied Soviet territories as an exclusive authority to collect and confiscate art and cultural assets, and promised that “all valuable works of art, in accordance with your personal plans, Führer, will find their way to the museum at Linz.”⁸ On March 1, 1942, Hitler issued an order in the spirit of Rosenberg’s request.⁹

DEPLOYMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF SPECIAL STAFF ROSENBERG TEAMS

Special Staff Rosenberg established three centers in the occupied territories, in Riga, Minsk, and Kiev, and it was from them that its activity in all the territories was conducted. The three centers were compatible with the division of the German Army North, Center, and South, and they all had branches in the main cities of the occupied territories. Each of the branches was staffed by several Germans, most of them academics. Locally employed personnel worked alongside them.

Special Staff Rosenberg branches took control of the archives, museums, and libraries—including church libraries, the contents of synagogues, etc. The material collected underwent preliminary sorting with the help of local employees; it was then decided which material would be transferred to Germany and which would remain or be sent to paper factories for recycling. In Germany, the material underwent an additional classification and distributed among the various institutions under Rosenberg's authority: the central library in Berlin, the Institute for the Research of the Jewish Question in Frankfurt. It was then used in the organization of anti-Jewish and anti-communist exhibitions.

Special Staff Rosenberg published a document reporting that 2,265 institutions in the occupied Soviet territories had been scanned by its units, and works of art and cultural assets were removed and sent to Germany.¹⁰ In many towns throughout the occupied territories, exhibitions were organized in order to spread Nazi propaganda among the local population, with emphasis on the connection between Jews and Bolshevism.¹¹

CONFISCATION OF JEWISH ART AND CULTURAL ASSETS

Most of the areas in which Special Staff Rosenberg was active and in which Jewish art and cultural institutions were located were those that had been annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940. The institutions, which included library archives, art collections, and synagogues with valuable collections of holy books and religious artifacts, had been confiscated by the Soviet authorities even before the German occupation. Other art collections existed in private Jewish hands, including ancient manuscripts and valuable Torah writings. The Soviet authorities had not yet managed to lay their hands on these. Apart from certain types of literature and specifically communist Yiddish newspapers, the Soviet authorities in the old Soviet territories had confiscated any art that could be defined as being intrinsically Jewish in value. Some of the confiscated art collections were destroyed; others were stored in archives or warehouses to which the general public had no access.

Special Staff Rosenberg arrived in Riga in August 1941, shortly after the civil administration took control of the area, and its sphere of authority included the Baltic states. The first stage in its activity consisted of registering all the institutions and buildings that could possibly contain Jewish-owned art and cultural resources. In a September 22 directive, Lohse stressed that registration was to include synagogues, Jewish community institutions, rabbis' residences, commercial buildings containing Jewish books and artifacts, and institutions connected

to the Freemasons and the Anglican Church. The local municipal authorities were entrusted with the registration.

In the wake of these orders, reports began arriving from the local administration about buildings in which Jewish valuables were found or were liable to be found. A document sent by the mayor of Riga to the city's Gebietskommissar on October 15, 1941, names the thirty-five Jewish institutions in the city, their addresses, and the names and fate of their directors. The list includes an educational institution, a Jewish scientific institution, the "Ort" foundation, and others. These thirty-five Jewish institutions in Riga were the main agencies of Latvian Jewry that had already been closed down or confiscated by the Soviet authorities. But the German administration and Special Staff Rosenberg believed that the books and the artifacts had remained inside the buildings. Reports from the various districts in Latvia also referred to communist-related books and institutions. These reports focused mainly on synagogue buildings, offices that had formerly belonged to the Jewish community, and the rabbis' residences.

According to a document titled "Report on the Treatment of Hebrew Books" published in Latvia on March 21, 1942, by Special Staff Rosenberg, some 35,000 books were concentrated in Riga, of which 17,000 had been sorted into fifteen genres, on the basis of form, style, or subject matter. These books were to be sent to Frankfurt, Germany. The remaining books were to be sent to paper mills for recycling. Instructions for sorting the books were given by Dr. Johann Pohl, an expert on Judaism.¹²

In Generalkommissariat Lithuania, especially in the larger cities of Vilnius and Kaunas, the Germans found large quantities of Jewish art and cultural assets. The Strashun library in Vilnius, established in 1893, contained about 35,000 volumes, mostly rabbinic literature and ancient manuscripts dating back to the fifteenth century. The Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Society, established in 1903, had collected valuable Jewish material in the fields of history, folklore, literature, drama, and art, and its library contained the original Hebrew and Yiddish manuscripts of well-known scholars. The Yiddish Scientific Institute (known as Yivo) was established in 1924 and housed 20,000 books, Yiddish newspapers published all over the world, paintings by Jewish artists, and a treasury of Jewish music. In the occupied Soviet territories, Vilnius was the most important Jewish cultural center to fall into German hands.

About five weeks after its occupation, in early August 1941, a researcher from the Frankfurt Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question visited Vilnius in order to check on the material in the Yivo and in the Strashun library. Noah Prilutzky, the former manager of the Yivo, and Khaykl Lunski, a senior worker in the Strashun library, were taken to the city's Sipo and placed at the disposal

of Rosenberg's people. They were ordered to prepare lists of all ancient and rare manuscripts as well as other valuable art collections. The two were held in the Sipo cellars and, from there, they were taken to the Yivo and the Strashun library where they were forced to prepare the lists. Their work continued for several weeks, after which Rosenberg's representative returned to Berlin with the lists and six incunabula from the Strashun library.¹³

A branch of Special Staff Rosenberg was established in Vilnius in early 1942 and included a team of scientists headed by Dr. Johann Pohl; the Jewish council placed twenty workers at their disposal, among them literary and scientific experts. After preliminary sorting of the material at the Yivo, it transpired that before the arrival of the Special Staff Rosenberg in Vilnius, another German authority had removed the entire newspaper archive—about 12,000 newspapers—as well as thousands of books, most of them antique.¹⁴ In a comprehensive report dated April 28, 1942, and headed “Handling Judaica and Hebraica in Vilnius,” Dr. Pohl wrote about some 10,000 volumes that had been brought to the Yivo from synagogues and private Jewish homes during the winter of 1941–42. Of the 6,880 volumes that had been checked up to the writing of the report, 5,118 had been found to be doubles and were sent to a paper mill for recycling; the remaining 1,762 volumes, on which Dr. Pohl provided details, were destined for dispatch to Germany.¹⁵

From time to time, shipments of Jewish material destined for Germany were held up because of a lack of transportation, and for this reason, material meant for Germany was sent to the paper mills.¹⁶ In May 1942 a shipment of religious artifacts was sent from Lithuania to the Institute for Research of the Jewish Question in Frankfurt; in the shipment were Torah crowns and various kinds of embroidered silk and velvet Torah coverings. Religious artifacts that were seen as less valuable were sent for recycling.¹⁷

In August 1942, Special Staff Rosenberg put on an anti-Semitic exhibition at the Yivo building, using books and other exhibits from the Yivo and elsewhere to “prove” the connection of Jewish culture with Bolshevism. The exhibition's target audience consisted of members of the German and local Lithuanian administration, as well as visitors from Germany.¹⁸ During their employment by Special Staff Rosenberg, which lasted until the liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto in August–September 1943, the Jewish slave laborers were able to rescue some of the valuable books, manuscripts, and works of art by smuggling them out and hiding them in the ghetto.¹⁹

Special Staff Rosenberg also carried out the looting of Jewish culture assets in Kaunas. According to Dr. Pohl's report dated April 20, 1942, in the theater hall in 10 Mapu Street, 5,452 books were packed in nineteen crates, destined for Germany. About 7,000 books were to be recycled for industrial purposes.²⁰

In Generalkommissariat Belorussia, Special Staff Rosenberg's activity was limited. In Minsk, Jewish art and culture assets had been confiscated or destroyed during Soviet rule. In a letter to Lohse on March 10, 1942, Generalkommissar Kube wrote:

Much of the Jewish cultural assets were impossible [to locate] in Belorussia. Most of the Jewish synagogues were destroyed in the course of the battles. . . . In general, confiscation in Belorussia was carried out to the best of our ability and can be summed up as being meager.²¹

In the Ukraine, Special Staff Rosenberg began operating during the summer of 1942 with the arrival of Dr. Pohl, who until then had operated in the Baltic states. In June Dr. Pohl prepared two reports on the situation of Jewish art and culture in Kiev. According to the report dated June 28:

1. In the religious seminar in the Podol quarter [in central Kiev] there are:

. . . .

—About 50,000 volumes of Judaica and Hebraica brought there by the Bolsheviks. . . . The material is of great value and will be sent to — Frankfurt. There is need for 250 crates.

—About 25,000 volumes of Hebraica brought there by the Bolsheviks are [lying] in disorder. . . . An estimated 8,000 to 10,000 of these volumes will be sent to Frankfurt and remainder will be recycled. . . .

2. Some 30,000 books are stored in the former central Jewish library.

. . . Apart from these, there is a valuable collection of bound annual editions of newspapers. . . . The collection in Kiev ready for dispatch to Frankfurt contains about 90,000 books on Judaica.²²

On September 29, 1942, Rosenberg's Kiev branch reported on the dispatch of 45,000 books and other publications to the institute in Frankfurt. The reports pointed out that due to a lack of suitable packaging material, all the material was loaded, unpackaged, onto the railway carriage.²³ According to another report sent by Pohl from Kiev, which dealt with activity during October 20 and 24, 1942, after an examination of the unsorted material in Podol, dating from the Soviet period, 27,663 volumes had been chosen for dispatch to Frankfurt, including 5,000 volumes of rabbinical writings and 3,000 journals; 35,000 volumes were to be sent to the paper mill for recycling. The work of sorting through the material was carried out by some Ukrainian auxiliaries, and the transport to Frankfurt was to set off from Kiev only on May 29, 1943. Also, the shipment would include 6,000 volumes from the former city's Jewish music conservatory. In his November 1, 1942, report on Hebraica and Judaica in Kharkov, Pohl mentioned a catalog

in the municipal library detailing 10,000 volumes, of which 40 percent were Jewish-Soviet literature, 40 percent were Jewish non-Soviet literature, and 20 percent were Hebrew literature.²⁴

The activity of Special Staff Rosenberg and the theft of Jewish arts and literature from the occupied Soviet territories, including work by Jewish artists, continued until the end of the German occupation.

In the occupied Soviet territories collections of Jewish arts and culture were the result of generations of extensive cultural activity, beginning in the fifteenth century. It is impossible to estimate the number of books and works of art looted and sent to Germany. It is, however, possible to determine, based on the numbers of books recorded in Dr. Pohl's reports, that they were in the hundreds of thousands. A similar, or even larger, number of books were sent to paper mills for recycling.

NINE

Non-Jewish Society
and Its Reaction to the
Genocide of the Jews

The Local Population

THE ELEMENTS AFFECTING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JEWS

The success of Germany's Final Solution, which aimed to bring about the total annihilation of the Jews in the occupied Soviet territories, depended to a great degree on the willingness of the local population to help carry out this policy. This chapter deals with behavior of the population as a whole toward the Jews, rather than those of collaborators—the police and local authorities—whose activity has been described in previous chapters. Several factors determined the opinions of this population, which was a conglomeration of nationalities and religions, regarding the Germans and their anti-Jewish policies. The basic factor was the strength of their anti-Semitism before the German invasion, the power of nationalism, and to some degree the German policy toward the indigenous people.

Anti-Semitism in these territories was widespread, mainly religious and economic in nature, and German anti-Semitic propaganda fell on fertile soil. In areas annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40, especially in the Baltic states and in Bessarabia and North Bukovina, anti-Semitism was strengthened by public opposition to the very annexation, which was carried out by brute Soviet force. Many people identified the Jews with the hated communist rule.¹ For these reasons, many of the locals saw the German army as liberators from the Soviet occupation and gave them a warm welcome. The obvious expression of prevalent anti-Jewish sentiments was a series of pogroms that swept these areas during the first weeks of German occupation.²

One more issue was connected with Jewish property. Large quantities of Jewish property, including the homes of the deported Jews, had been appropriated by members of the local population. Such people hoped to avoid the Jews' return after the war, as they would naturally demand that their property be returned to them.

Gradually, the local population, especially in the Baltic states and Ukraine, became disappointed that the Germans had rejected their national aspirations for some form of independence. The worsening economic situation, the dispatch of many thousands of people to forced labor in Germany, the cruel treatment of Soviet POWs, and the terror used against them all affected the local population's attitude toward Germany in all the occupied territories. This was also stirred by the Germans' defeats at the front, mainly after the Stalingrad battle, and this, together with the increased activity of the partisans, undermined their confidence in a German victory. The early sympathy and even support of substantial segments of the local population for Germany faded as the occupation continued.

This change in attitude among the local population toward Germany had limited effects on their feelings about the Jews and their fate. When the gradual change took place, beginning in the second half of 1942, and the forced mobilization of people to work in Germany accelerated, accompanied by an increase of Nazi terror, most Jews in the occupied territories had already been murdered. So if it would be a change in the attitude of the local people toward the Jews, it would affect few of them. But such a change did not occur. In the memoirs and testimonies of the surviving Jews, hardly any changes could be found.³ The main causes for anti-Semitism, nationalism, and greed did not change.

ANTI-JEWISH POLICIES AS REFLECTED IN GERMAN REPORTS

The German administration in the occupied territories followed the mood of the local population, including its feelings about the Jews and Germany's policies toward them. In his October 15, 1941, report, Stahlecker, commander of Einsatzgruppe A, wrote: "Since the German army conquered Lithuania . . . there has been no weakening of the active anti-Semitism that was easily ignited. In all anti-Jewish steps, the Lithuanians take a stand alongside us, willingly and unreservedly."⁴

According to a clause dealing with cleansing the rear area of Army Group North, in the September 17, 1941, report from Himmler's field commando (Kommandostab RF-SS): "The Latvian and Estonian population in the area of SS Second Infantry Brigade is friendly and helpful to our forces. The Russian population in these areas—as well as in the areas of operation of other brigades—is still in a waiting position and reserved."⁵ Much is written in the Einsatzgruppen reports on the position taken by the local populations toward the German occupation, its opinion of the Jews, and its reaction to the murder of Jews. Thus, according to some of the reports:

July, 29, 1941, Zhitomir . . . The population, with only a few exceptions, is consciously anti-Semitic.

August 5, 1941 . . . the attitude of the population in general, at least in the areas of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, can be described as friendly toward the Germans. . . . In general the population harbors a feeling of hatred and rage toward the Jews and approves of the German measures (establishing ghettos, labor units, security police, procedure, etc.). . . .

September 12, 1941 . . . in the districts of central and east Ukraine . . . the population is always grateful for our treatment of the Jewish question. . . . Executions of Jews are understood everywhere and accepted favorably.

October 7, 1941, Smolensk . . . the population reports uniformly about the Jewish terror against them during Soviet rule. . . . However, in spite of our energetic attempts, they are not ready for any action against the Jews. The decisive reason here seems to be the fear of Jewish revenge in case of a return of the Reds.

November 19, 1941, Kiev . . . The animosity against communism and Jews finds expression not only in increased denunciation but also in conversations among the population.

March 6, 1942, Kiev . . . The strong measures taken by the Einsatzgruppen against the Jews and former Communist Party members had good results with respect to the feelings of the general public.

March 9, 1942, . . . the execution of the Jews of Minsk on March 3. . . . The population welcomed the action. . . .

March 27, 1942, [Belorussia] Further large-scale actions against Jews, for instance, in Rakov and Cherven. . . . Educated circles remarked that they are not used to such actions.⁶

The purpose of these reports was to demonstrate to its recipients that the general reactions of substantial sections of the local population to the Germans' annihilation of the Jews and to the actions of the Einsatzgruppen was favorable. Basically they expressed the prevailing mood of the local population at that time and correlate with the Jewish sources given further. Nonetheless, as reflected in these reports, there was some difference between the people of the Baltic states and those of the Ukraine, where views about the German occupation and Germany's anti-Jewish policies were more favorable than in Belorussia and Russia. For Belorussia, this can be explained by the absence of a strong nationalistic (and anti-Semitic) movement there with an aim to achieve some form of independence with the help of the Germans.⁷ With regard to the Russian people, patriotism (*matushka Russyia*—mother Russia) and the fact that many of their sons and fathers were fighting against Nazi Germany prevented most Russians

from welcoming the Germans and supporting their actions, including pogroms and wide-scale participation in the murder of Jews.

THE LOCAL POPULATION AND ITS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JEWS: FROM JEWISH SOURCES

Diaries from the Holocaust years, testimonies and memoirs of Holocaust survivors, and research on various regions deal at length with local reactions to the Jews. Apart from the diaries and research, the remaining sources come from Jews, some of whom survived with the help of local people. We don't have in our possession—nor could we have—the stories of all those who sought help from non-Jews and were refused, nor even of those who were handed over to the Germans. These did not live to tell their tale.

Leib Garfunkel, who spent the Holocaust years in Lithuania, wrote:

One of the factors that so exacerbated the suffering and pain of the Jewish population in Lithuania, and intensified their tragic fate, was the inhuman attitude toward the Jews on the part of many of their Lithuanian co-nationals, on all social levels. It was a side effect of the miserable downward slide in relations between the Lithuanians and the Jews, especially during the first year of Soviet rule and the annexation of Lithuania to the Soviet Union. . . . The vast majority of Lithuanians identified the Jews with communism and blamed them for all the human and political suffering inflicted on them with the loss of their independence. . . . Feelings and urges of blind and burning hatred began churning in the awareness of many Lithuanians toward the Jews. . . . It was an atmosphere that was prevalent among the Lithuanians vis-à-vis the Jewish population, as columns of Nazi soldiers invaded Lithuania. . . . In the period between June 22, 1941, and around the end of the year and to a certain extent even afterwards, many Lithuanians stained their hands with Jewish blood, with a wild and inhuman cruelty.⁸

The situation in Latvia did not differ greatly from that in Lithuania. According to Max Kaufmann: “As an eyewitness to the great tragedy in Latvia, I cannot minimize the German guilt. But from the Latvians, with whom we had coexisted for several hundred years, and with whom we had passed through good times as well as bad, we should have expected human rather than animal treatment.”⁹ The December 1941 action in the township of Iodi in western Belorussia is described thus:

The local non-Jewish population came to watch the “entertainment.” Local police . . . carried out the executions. . . . Meanwhile, the local population

looted all the homes of [Iodi's] Jews. . . . There were very few Germans involved in the massacre. They supervised the actions. . . . But I must emphasize that most of the 100 Jews of Iodi still alive on New Year's Day 1942 owed their lives to righteous gentiles who risked their lives and the lives of their families to help Jews survive.¹⁰

In eastern Belorussia, where for the twenty years of Soviet rule anti-Semitism was against the law, the viewpoint of the local population was not significantly different from that of the west Belorussian public. As Boris Efros from Janovichi in the province of Vitebsk related:

The Germans occupied Janovichi on July 11 and 12, 1941. . . . The local population changed its attitude toward the Jews. The locals were able to come and take whatever they wanted from the Jews. . . . Russian friends turned a cold shoulder to their Jewish friends, with whom they had gone to school. . . . Those who betrayed Jews also betrayed the communists . . . not the rank and file but the leaders and activists among them. . . . At first the population started supporting the partisans because of German terror, and later—following the Russian counterattack near Moscow [winter 1941]. The peasants began to realize that the “Bolsheviks” were still a force that might return.¹¹

Other testimonies contained favorable descriptions of the local population in Belorussia. According to Tamara Gershakovich of Minsk:

One has to remember that Belorussians and Russians were threatened with execution for going into the ghetto or even for exchanging a word with a Jew through the fence. . . . And if everyone in the Ghetto did not die of hunger before the last day of its existence, then it was only thanks to the fact that the Jews had maintained relations with the local inhabitants. And in spite of all the Germans' threats, many Russians and Belorussians, risking not only their own lives but the lives of their families, hid Jewish children in their homes.¹²

In his study of the Holocaust in Volhynia, Spector describes the local population's treatment of Jews in west Ukraine:

Popular, traditional Jew hatred resurfaced, unleashing pogroms against the Jews in nearly every rural and urban settlement. . . . Anti-Jewish propaganda and incitement kept pouring forth from newspaper columns and church pulpits. The initiative passed over to Ukrainian public figures who assumed control of the local administration. . . . The Ukrainians' despoiling the Jews of their property continued until their liquidation.¹³

The historian Philip Friedman, provides an eyewitness account of the fate of Jews who tried to find shelter among the local population in Lvov:

In most cases the Jews found shelter with people who were interested in material gain . . . and on more than one occasion landlords threw Jews out as soon as their money had run out. On occasion, blackmailers learned of such hiding places and demanded large sums of money for keeping quiet, almost on a monthly basis. . . . Jews who “looked good” were able to find another way out. Many of them disguised themselves as Christians. . . . Detectives would scour the streets for bogus “Aryans.” Individual blackmailers, crooks, and even children wandered the streets and had reached such a degree of expertise that they could identify at a glance a Jew in disguise. . . . Every day dozens of Jews in hiding or in disguise were caught.¹⁴

Apart from the majority Ukrainian population in the Volhynia region, there was also a large Polish community. Although the ingrained anti-Semitism was no less powerful among the Poles than among the Ukrainians, the Poles, most of whom were anti-German and also persecuted by them and by the Ukrainians, were kinder to the Jews. There was less active participation in robbery and murder on the part of the Poles, and their attitude was also expressed to a certain degree in their willingness to help the Jews.¹⁵

Many survivors from eastern Ukraine were the spouses or partners of Jews or were themselves part-Jewish, and they managed to escape death with the help of Aryan relatives. A study of their testimonies sheds light on Ukrainian behavior toward the Jews. I. S. Belozovska from Kiev was married to a Ukrainian. She and her son, Igor, were saved with the help of her husband and his family. She testifies:

On September 19, when the Germans began entering the city people stood along both sides of the street (Krasnoarmeyskaya Street, beside the Vladimir market) with servile, eager-to-please expressions that pretended to be joyful. They greeted their “liberators,” the Germans who were bringing a “great life.” . . . I can live for the time being, because they [the Ukrainian relatives] want to save the mother of my son, Igor, their grandson. . . . All the neighbors were curious to discover my whereabouts. They knew I was somewhere, since they had seen me on the day the Germans arrived, but they no longer knew where I was. . . . The building superintendent raised the question of Igor’s life—his mother was a Jew, after all—saying he needed to be handed over to the Germans. . . . Everyone in the building tried to catch him off guard, suddenly asking, “Where’s your mama?” Outside the apartment, he was forbidden to say the word *mama*, and at home, only quietly, so no one would hear. . . . I was alive, but it was a bitter, hopeless life.¹⁶

Sara Gleich, a student from Mariupol in the Ukraine, wrote about her Ukrainian neighbors:

On October 18, 1941 . . . it was announced that we had two hours to leave town. . . . The neighbors waited like vultures for us to leave the apartment. In fact, they were not even shy in our presence. Masha opened the doors. . . . They all rushed into the apartment. . . . The neighbors quarreled over things before my eyes, snatching things out of each other's hands and dragging off pillows, pots, and quilts.¹⁷

The Ukrainian Police archives in Kharkov contained documents pertaining to tenants in apartment houses informing on individual Jews who were trying to hide their identity and continuing to live in their homes. According to some of the informants:

I am hereby informing you . . . that the Jewess Raissa Nikolayevna Yakubovich is registered in the house registry as a Jew. She now refuses to show her passport and claims to have lost it. I insist that Raissa Yakubovich is a Jew. . . . Apartment number 22 in number 88 Pushkin Street is inhabited by Alexandra Grigorevna Leventovka-Gurevich. According to her passport, until the arrival of the German army in Kharkov, she was a Jewess. This in accordance with rulings determined by one-third of the inhabitants of this building. . . . But since the arrival of the German army, she suddenly wants to be a Russian.¹⁸

Such information was received in all the cities of the occupied Soviet territories. Concierges and landlords were ordered to report to the local police on Jews, Communist Party members, and former NKVD staff, living in the houses for which they were responsible. Even ordinary tenants and neighbors gave the police the names and addresses of thousands of Jews who had not responded to the evacuation orders. Each apartment house was required to appoint three tenants (known as the "troika"), who in addition to concierges and landlords were responsible for informing the police or the local authority whatever they knew about Jews living in their buildings.¹⁹

Many Jews who did not obey the evacuation orders were forced to leave and start to wander across the country when they felt they were on the brink of arrest. There were also those who tried to cross the front line and reach Soviet-held territories. Maryia Kosaia from Kharkov testified:

I went wandering from village to village. Some people gave shelter for a day or two only, and I had to move on. . . . There was danger in every village of being caught and handed over to the village head or the police; the meaning of this was death. . . . I would choose a house that appeared to have poorer

inhabitants, where I felt for whatever reason that there was less danger. I am grateful to those good people who allowed me into their warm huts and gave me a little food. Thus, wandering, I gradually approached the front. . . . I spent over a year suffering and wandering around. Finally, in mid-February 1943 I arrived at our military positions in the district of Dnepropetrovsk. That's how I survived.²⁰

Kosaia was not the only one who wandered hundreds of miles in an attempt to cross the front. Others succeeded, thanks to people who helped them on their way and because they managed to conceal their Jewish identity.²¹ Most of the escapees were caught. The harboring of Jews by the local population and even the nondeliverance of information on Jews in hiding, or Jews passing themselves as Aryans, was regarded by the German administration as a crime punishable by death. The threat of death was posted in the city streets and in newspapers. An order published on October 10, 1941, in the Ukrainian town of Cherkassy said that “for harboring Jews and for ties with partisans, the criminals will be shot on the spot without trial.”²² An order issued by the Sipo in the Crimean town of Kerch in December 1941, following the murder of the town's Jews, informed the population that “inhabitants of the town who know of the whereabouts of Jews must inform the Sipo. Noncompliance with this order will result in death by shooting.”²³ These orders influenced the local population's willingness to help Jews seeking shelter and rescue. Under different circumstances, more people would have been prepared to help, but they were not willing to risk their lives for the Jews.

The local populations in the occupied Soviet territories may be divided into three groups: the Nazi collaborators, bystanders, and those who helped the Jews.

Hundreds of thousands of Nazi collaborators were to be found in all regions under German occupation. They were influenced in their behavior by inherent anti-Semitism, hatred of the Soviet Union, and the fact that they associated the Jews with communism. Some of them were motivated by greed. This group includes all those who actively assisted the German administration in hunting down and murdering Jews.

Millions were included in the “bystander” category. They did not express active hostility toward the Jews, although there were obviously many among them who enjoyed the property left behind by the Jews. The behavior of this group was affected by inherent anti-Semitism, together with indifference and fear. Their indifference was caused by the large-scale death they witnessed and the overall suffering caused by the war. The murder of Jews was no more to them than an

integral part of the cruelty of war. The fear came as a result of the orders issued by the Germans, which threatened the execution of anyone who dared to help the Jews. Their indifference served the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies because, if they were to survive, the Jews required the active assistance of the local population for shelter, Aryan documents, etc. When this assistance was not forthcoming, there was no chance for the Jew, who was fighting for his life (except for those in regions where the partisans were active and in the forests).

Only a few thousand people tried to rescue the Jews. They were called "Righteous among the Nations."

33

The Righteous among the Nations

EXTENT OF THE RESCUE AND ITS PROBLEMS

In the occupied Soviet territories, the Jews received no organized assistance from any specific local group or from any anti-German underground movement. Their only help came from individuals, who put their own lives in jeopardy.¹ There were cases of several people or families working together to rescue Jews, usually by providing them with a safe shelter. Such shelters would be provided for various lengths of time, depending on conditions and the risks entailed. Sometimes shelter would be given for a day or two, sometimes even for a year or more. Occasionally the aid took the form of supplying Aryan documents.

Such people, who risked their lives in order to help the Jews, lived in all parts of the occupied Soviet territories, but they were few. According to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, by January 1, 2005, the title “Righteous among the Nations” had been awarded to 2,079 Ukrainians, 653 Belorussians and Russians, 555 Lithuanians, 96 Latvians, 69 Moldavians, 10 Armenians, and 3 Estonians. This is a small number, compared with the total population of the occupied Soviet territories at that time, which numbered between 60 and 70 million.²

These numbers do not include all the people who helped Jews, only those about whom information has reached Yad Vashem. The relatively large number of Ukrainians among the Righteous among the Nations does not mean that the Ukrainians were kinder to the Jews than any other nation in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. It results from the high concentration of Jews in the Ukraine and the number of Ukrainians, who constituted the largest national group in these territories.³ The criteria for granting the title of Righteous among the Nations is truthful evidence that a non-Jewish person risked his or her life in order to rescue Jews and that this was done for humanitarian reasons.

The assistance usually took the form of some kind of shelter, either in the rescuer’s home or nearby. It was easier in the remote villages and farms to harbor Jews than in the middle of urban concentrations. This kind of assistance also

required a supply of food—which was especially difficult under conditions of severe shortage. Sometimes the Jew would contribute to the cost of food, but often he would be unable to do so, and the entire burden would fall on the rescuer. But not all the attempts at rescuing Jews were successful. There were occasions when people were arrested and murdered, whether as a result of betrayal or by chance in the course of attempting to help the Jews. On occasion, an entire family would be executed. The actual number of executions is not known, but it is feasible to assume that there were many hundreds of them.

Different reasons motivated the rescuers. They were all well aware of the Germans' orders, which forbade all help to the Jews, and the death penalty that awaited anyone who defied these orders. Generally, the rescuers acted within an environment that was hostile to their deeds, and they had to be on their guard constantly, no less against the betrayal of their neighbors than against police round-ups. Anyone informing on the whereabouts of a Jew was rewarded, in the form of clothing belonging to Jews who had been caught and murdered, a few kilograms of salt, sugar, or alcoholic drinks.

Initiative for rescue activity came from two directions: from a Jew seeking to be rescued and approaching an acquaintance, a local non-Jew, asking for help for himself or his family. Circumstances sometimes forced a Jew to turn to people he didn't know. Sometimes salvation came from the rescuers themselves, who, seeing people they knew—or even didn't know—in grave danger, stepped forward and offered to help. Each rescue story is unique and had its own motives.

The people who hid Jews in or near their homes could not have done so without the cooperation of their families, but other kinds of rescue activity, such as the supply of Aryan documents, could have been carried out without the knowledge of the rescuer's family. The chances for a Jew to live out the war under an Aryan identity were very complicated. For this, it was necessary first of all for the Jew to look like an Aryan; he or she needed a good knowledge of the local language, a suitable accent, and a familiarity with local customs and Christian religious rituals. It was important, too, that the local population did not identify a Jew passing for an Aryan. Everywhere, there were people ready and willing to inform on a Jew and, at times, to extort the last of his money, before betraying him.

RESCUE ACTIVITY IN THE TERRITORIES ANNEXED TO THE SOVIET UNION

In Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, it was especially hard to help the Jews, because of the extensive cooperation of the local population with the Germans. Nonetheless, even in this hostile environment, there were people who

stepped forward to help. One of these was Jonas Paulavicius, a carpenter, who lived with his wife and two children in a suburb of Kaunas. His rescue activity began quite by chance. His son befriended a Jewish youth, 14-year-old Jonathan Fein, who had given violin concerts at his school before the war. Paulavicius agreed to shelter the boy in his home. A short time later, Paulavicius took in three members of the Shemesh family and offered shelter to several other members of the Jewish intelligentsia from the ghetto. He prepared for them two small underground rooms near his home. On the eve of the liberation of Kaunas, in July 1944, Paulavicius brought in some more Jews; twelve Jews found shelter in his home.

What motivated a simple, poorly educated man to rescue Jews whom he did not know and, by doing so, to risk his family's lives? His reasoning was that, after the war, and once the Germans were expelled, these Jews would be able to reestablish the Jewish community in Kaunas. The man himself did not discuss much of it, and the survivors attribute his noble act to his respect for the Jewish people as well as his socialist worldview. His wartime activity of saving Jews became known to his Lithuanian neighbors only after liberation. The anti-Semites among them could not forgive the "father of Jews," as they called him, and murdered him. Jonas Paulavicius was not the only one to be murdered after the war. Mykolas Simelis, a Lithuanian lumberjack who sheltered fourteen Jews, most of them from Kaunas, in a bunker he had dug under his house in the southeastern Lithuanian township of Vievis, was also murdered near his home. Simelis's housemaid was told by the murderers that "this is what happens to anyone who helps the Jews."⁴

An exceptional personality among the Righteous in the Kaunas region was Bronius Gotautas, an uneducated villager, whose devout Catholicism made it possible for him to live in a monastery. When he witnessed the cruelty of the Nazis toward the Jews, he decided to take action. He had many acquaintances among the priests, who provided fake birth certificates and shelter for several Jews. He was betrayed, arrested, and sent to the Stutthof concentration camp. He survived the war.⁵

Survivors of the Vilnius ghetto make frequent mention in their memoirs of Ona Simaite, a librarian who worked at the University of Vilnius. Under the pretext of returning books previously taken by Jewish students, Simaite entered the ghetto and maintained contact with its inhabitants. Tania Sterntahl, a girl whom Simaite managed to smuggle out of the ghetto, wrote of her, "Simaite . . . established a committee for the rescue of Jews, which consisted of three women. The committee's objective was to search for contacts in order to hide Jews, counterfeit documents. . . . With her food coupons she sent food to the children in the ghetto, to the orphanage. She was interested in saving the nation's culture.

... She took the works of the poet Sutzkever in order to preserve them.”⁶ She was arrested in the late spring or early summer of 1944 and sentenced to death, but her friends in the university used bribery to save her from execution. Instead, she was sent to the Dachau concentration camp. From there, she was transferred to the south of France and was subsequently freed by the Allies.⁷

The priest Juzas Stakauskas was of mixed Polish-Lithuanian stock. On behalf of the German authorities in Vilnius, he was responsible for the Benedictine monastery that served as an archive and as a central storage place for books and manuscripts brought to Vilnius from other parts of the occupied Soviet territories. Stakauskas forged ties with the Jews employed in sorting books, and when the Vilnius ghetto was liquidated in the summer of 1943, he and a nun, Maria Mikulska, prepared a hiding place in the monastery for eleven of the Jewish archive workers. During the day, the archive was active and visited by Germans and Lithuanians, and Stakauskas and those who helped him were in great danger. On his visits to the Jews’ hiding place, Stakauskas would say, “Either we shall all survive, or we shall all die.” For almost a year, until the liberation of the city in July 1944, the Jews remained in their hideout and were saved due to their rescuers’ devout Christianity and love of mankind.⁸

From the second half of 1943, following a certain change in attitude on the part of the Lithuanian public toward the Germans, Jewish representatives of the ghettos in Kaunas and Siauliai turned to certain Lithuanians with a request for help in rescuing children. Some of the Lithuanians responded, and several dozen children were removed from the ghettos; a few of them were placed in children’s institutions.⁹

Among those who rescued Jews in Latvia, Janis Lipke stood out. A port worker, Lipke had witnessed the action in Riga in late November 1941 and was so shocked that he decided to do his utmost to help the Jews. He worked in a German air force unit, which also employed Jews from the ghetto. Lipke bought a farm near the town Dobeles, where, together with his wife and son, he hid Jews; he also organized several of his friends to harbor Jews. By the time Riga was liberated in October 1944, Lipke had saved the lives of forty-two Jews.¹⁰

It was easier in east and west Belorussia to help Jews than in the Baltic states because the population had fewer anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic tendencies. In the Kobilniki region near the Naroch lake in Belorussia, Juzef Tunkevich hid fourteen Jews. For two years, one woman hid six Jews under the floor of a warehouse, in a village near Stolbtsy. In Ivie, in return for the support provided by a Jewish family during the Soviet rule, a Polish cobbler called Kurbat sheltered fifteen Jews.¹¹

In west Ukraine widespread anti-Semitism and collaboration with the Germans

made conditions for rescuing Jews harder than in Belorussia. In the forests and the rural regions were active Ukrainian nationalist partisan units, such as the UPA, whose attitude toward the Jews was hostile. Jews who fell into their hands were murdered.¹² Nonetheless, even in those regions, there were people who offered a helping hand to the Jews. According to research on Volhynia:

Some exceptional Ukrainians came to the aid of single Jews or even whole families. . . . The most distinguished among them was Vitold Fomenko from Lutsk. . . . Shortly before the liquidation, both he and his father began supplying his friends with “Aryan” papers. They were arrested and subjected to long interrogations. They were released thanks only to their good relations with the local police chief. . . . After the liquidation of the ghetto . . . they rented a big house, began living there, and used it to shelter Jews. . . . Thirty-six of his protégés survived. . . . Large number of cases of assistance and rescue are documented to have occurred in remote Polish villages across the Sluch River. Hundreds of Jews hiding there were offered food and shelter. . . . From mid-1943 rescue efforts began running into obstacles. Ukrainian nationalist partisans embarked on murdering Poles in Volhynia. . . . Jews in hiding suffered together with their protectors.¹³

Baptists in the western regions of Belorussia and west Ukraine were sympathetic to the Jews, mostly for religious reasons.¹⁴ Hundreds of Jews were saved. Thus, according to Hersh Posorski, who escaped from the Stolbtsy ghetto and came to the home of a Baptist blacksmith:

They welcomed us as if we were important guests, honoring their hosts with their presence. We asked them if they were afraid. They told us that they were afraid of nothing except God. Hitler cannot exterminate you, because you are eternity, and Israel is immortal. . . . You are the beloved sons of God, the chosen people. . . . You have been chosen by God to purify the world of evil and to bring salvation to humankind.¹⁵

In Lvov, thousands of Jews sought help among the local urban population, but most of them were caught. Philip Friedman, who was an eyewitness to events in Lvov, wrote:

In Lvov, several thousand Jews were still alive, having managed to escape and hide. Some of them were in hiding in the homes of Christian families, in tiny bunkers and dugouts; others lived in Aryan neighborhoods, under shelter of forged documents. . . . Over time, the German secret police uncovered many of them, and many were captured as a result of treachery. Christians caught for helping Jews were sentenced to death. . . . Executions were highly publicized

and were used by the Germans in order to terrorize the Christians into not giving shelter to Jews.¹⁶

The problems and dangers in hiding Jews inside the city are described in the diary of Pelagja Lozinska, a Ukrainian woman married to a Jew. She saved her husband and another Jewish family in Lvov. She wrote in her diary:

August 17, 1942 . . . Again, I arrived at the cemetery in order to help my husband find a hiding place. I approached the undertaker . . . Zumer, and asked him if he was prepared to hide my husband in a grave. Zumer agreed to my request in return for 500 zloty. Several more Jews joined with darkness, Zumer led them all to an empty grave and when he moved the headstone aside I noticed the empty iron coffins waiting to be filled by corpses. . . . Is it possible that my husband will be buried alive? The others said that they were prepared to hide out the war in a grave. After all, they insisted, spending time in a grave was better than being gassed to death. . . .

September 5, 1942 . . . My husband decided to move, with his mother, into the ghetto. . . .

November 25, 1942 . . . After liquidation of the ghetto, I took my husband out and brought him to my apartment. With the help of the Ukrainian doorman, Snishin, I set up a hiding place for my husband. . . .

May 11, 1943 . . . I've had a horrible night! I was visited by Polish secret policemen. . . . I bribed the Poles. They were given 10,000 zloty and turned in their tracks. . . .

June 24, 1944. The Red Army has arrived in town. My happiness and joy know no bounds.¹⁷

RESCUE ACTIVITY IN THE OLD TERRITORIES OF THE SOVIET UNION

Rescue activity in the old Soviet territories was on a smaller scale than in the annexed territories. There were several reasons for this: a precondition for attempts at rescuing Jews had to be the knowledge that they were about to be exterminated. With the exception of those in Minsk and a few other places, most Jews of the old territories were not aware that they were going to be murdered; this became clear only when they were standing on the edge of a pit facing a firing squad. Thus it was at Babi Yar in Kiev, in Vitebsk in Belorussia, and in Kerch in the Crimea, as well as in hundreds of other places in the old territories. Most of the rescue activity in the annexed territories, as described above, took place in localities where Jews had spent months and even years under German occupa-

tion—mostly in ghettos. Both the Jews and those who helped them had known of the Nazis' extermination policies and its execution, and the period between their awareness of the imminent annihilation and its actual timing allowed the Jew and the potential non-Jewish rescuer enough time to organize. In most of the old Soviet territories, this period did not exist, and the murders took place soon after the onset of occupation and came as a surprise to the victims. Rescue in the old territories, therefore, was less extensive than in the annexed territories. However, the many instances of mixed marriages in these territories, which resulted in greater interaction between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations, had a positive effect on the scale of rescue operations.

An exceptional act that took place in east Belorussia involved the rescue of several Jewish children from orphanages in Minsk. Vasily Orlov, who was responsible for orphanages in Minsk, participated, as did dozens of managers and staff in some of the other orphanages. Neli Gerbovitskaia, a Jewish child in the Minsk ghetto, was 10 at the time of the rescue:

When my mother was executed in March 1942, my brother Felix and I were left on our own. In order to obtain food, we were obliged to steal over the wire fence. . . . In February 1943, when I was very thin and freezing . . . , I was seen in the street by a Russian woman. . . . She took me to her home, fed and washed me, and the following morning told me that I wasn't to return to the place from which I had come [the ghetto], since they would kill me there. She took me to the municipality, where I was to receive a referral to a Russian orphanage. . . . She told me to say that I was from the village of Apchak and that both my parents had died. . . . We entered a room where a white-haired man [Orlov] sat with two young women on either side of him. . . . The two women began asking me provocative questions about my past. . . . Orlov stopped the interrogation and gave me a referral to the orphanage. . . . In almost all the orphanages, there were small numbers of Jewish children. . . . Winter 1943/1944. At the same time, there was an outbreak of typhus in Minsk and many of us fell ill. A notice was placed on the door saying "Typhus." The Germans were afraid to enter, and the notice remained in place even after the epidemic was over, and it helped us greatly.¹⁸

A wonderful story of rescue and escape is that of Vala Tokarski, a fair-haired 2-year-old from the Minsk ghetto. When it became clear that the end of the ghetto (and its inhabitants) was imminent, Katya, Vala's mother, decided to take daring measures in order to save her daughter. When she left for work before dawn on September 1, 1942, Katya wrapped the little girl in a blanket and took her out of the ghetto. She left the bundle at the entrance to a building and moved away to

watch over it from a distance. A passerby heard the child crying and bent to pick her up and take her to his home. Katya followed him to see which house he was entering. The man, so it turned out, was Misha Gromov, who had escaped from a German POW camp and was living with a woman called Elena Valendovich. A few days later, Katya visited the couple, introduced herself as the child's mother, and informed them that she was still living in the ghetto. A friendship developed between Katya and the couple. Katya herself escaped from the ghetto to join the partisans; she survived the war and was later reunited with her daughter.¹⁹

In *The Black Book*, Ehrenburg and Grossman describe the rescue of Jews in the old Soviet territories. After wandering across the region, seven Jewish families (thirty people) found shelter in the village of Blagodatnoe in the district of Guliaipole west of Zaporozhe. The only people who knew that they were Jews were the kolkhoz accountant, Pavel Zirchenko, and the veterinarian, G. I. Volkozub. The two organized work for the Jews in the kolkhoz, and it was due to them that they survived the Holocaust.²⁰

The three Gaidman sisters, Bronislava, Fanya, and Lina, were evacuated from Kiev to the north Caucasus town of Karachayevsk. When the Germans occupied the region in summer 1942, the sisters were taken in and hidden by the Moslem Kholomliiev family in the town of Teberda. The family consisted of fifteen people and belonged to the Karachaevtzy nation. The Kholomliievs were aware that the sisters were Jewish and of the risk they were taking in harboring them; also, they had to hide the three from their neighbors, many of whom were Nazi sympathizers. In January 1943 the Soviet army liberated Teberda, and the sisters were saved. Relating to the rescue of the sisters, Shmail Kholomliiev, the father of the family, said: "We are being tested by Allah, who wants to see what kind of people we are. We are not entitled to deny them shelter. . . . Whatever Allah has planned is what will happen."²¹

Dr. Polina Ausker was saved from a murder action in the Belorussian town of Borisov. In early November 1941 her wanderings and survival attempts led her to the Smolensk region, where she was sheltered by the Russian Lukinski family, who were aware that she was Jewish and hadn't known her previously. The family treated her as one of their own and arranged for her to receive Aryan documents. In gratitude, Polina decided to adopt their name and called herself Ausker-Lukinskaia.²²

Abraham Shpungin and Mathis Frost were probably the last Jews in the occupied territories to be rescued thanks to the local inhabitants. The two lived in the Riga ghetto and were later in Kaiserwald. In 1944 they found themselves in the Dundaga concentration camp in north Kurland in Latvia. When the Soviet army marched into Latvia in late June 1944, a rumor spread in the Dundaga camp that

prisoners were being transferred to Germany. Shpungin and Frost escaped. They hid in a cow shed near the camp, which belonged to the peasants Klara and Anton Vanax. Klara, who came to the shed to milk the cows, was surprised to find the two hiding there. Shpungin said to the frightened woman, "If you believe in God, you will not report us." And, indeed, Klara, her husband, and their 16-year-old daughter, who were Baptists, hid them for over ten months. On the afternoon of May 8, 1945, Klara and Anton came into the cow shed and informed them that "it has just been announced on the radio that Germany has surrendered." Anton suggested they remain in their hiding place until the following day, when the soldiers of the Soviet army were due to arrive. On the morning of May 9, 1945, Avraham and Mathis went out onto the street.²³

EXECUTIONS OF LOCAL INHABITANTS FOR HELPING JEWS

Notices to the local population warning them not to help escaping Jews, which were posted in prominent places throughout the occupied Soviet territories, stressed that anyone caught doing so would be executed forthwith. In the township Bikov in the Ukrainian district of Mogilev, members of the Killesso family were executed for using their cellar as a hiding place for the Jew Rosimov.²⁴ An August 18, 1943, report prepared by a Soviet military unit that liberated the village of Semenovka in the Dergachevski district in the county of Kharkov describes the murder of twenty-four Jewish inhabitants of the village, together with five non-Jews who had hidden some of them.²⁵ Another Soviet army report points out that in the village of Slishchevo in the Uvarovo district of the Moscow region, the Germans bayoneted a Jewish woman and her small son and shot the mother and daughter Selivanovi who sheltered them; in the Fedorovskaia village in the same region, the Germans shot a Jewish woman and her three children together with the 80-year-old landlady, Zinaida Vasilevna, who sheltered them.²⁶

In Kharkov, the journalist Alexandra Byelova was executed in the spring of 1943 for harboring an 11-year-old Jewish girl, Lena Arinberg.²⁷ In Vilnius, Joudka Vytautas was executed on January 31, 1942, together with the two women she was hiding, Isabella and Miriam Podselver.²⁸

Such executions of people who had harbored Jews were carried out in areas under German military rule as well as civilian administration without any legal intervention. The decisions were made by Sipo. When they felt like it, they would publicize the executions; when they did not, the executions would be carried out with no official statement being issued.

In District Galicia, which was a part of the General Government, people who were caught rescuing Jews were tried by special courts (*Sondergericht*) and not directly by Sipo. It became a widespread phenomenon, and it raised some problems. In a report dated October 7, 1943, the Sipo commander in the General Government wrote to RSHA in Berlin:

According to information arriving from District Galicia, there has been a sharp rise recently in the number of people being tried in Lvov for providing shelter to Jews. By law, this crime carries a death sentence. Under the circumstances, the special courts must produce a constant supply of death sentences. Among the judges there is more or less sharp opposition to this. The judges' claim is that it would be better for such crimes to be dealt with by the Sipo. Nonetheless, it is commonly agreed that a sentence of death is definitely necessary, since those Jews currently in hiding should be treated as bandits.²⁹

According to its content, the objective of this letter was to take the matter out of the special courts and hand it over to the Sipo. The decision on it could be taken only at the higher echelons in Berlin. On December 14, 1943, a public announcement was made in Lvov listing the names of fifty-four people who had been executed during the previous days. Next to eight of the names was the legend "For giving shelter to Jews" (*Judenbeherbengung wegen*).³⁰

A small number of people extended help to the Jews during this tragic period. Such people lived in all the regions and among all the nations in the occupied Soviet territories. They belonged to all levels of society: laborers, farmers, and clergymen, as well as members of the intelligentsia.³¹ The conditions under which they worked were harsher than those in most of the European states. German punishments in the occupied Soviet territories were harsh: execution without trial; punishment for the entire family; burning of homes, etc., all under the immediate authority of the local Sipo and other police authorities. There were several motives for the rescue of Jews: previous acquaintance, family ties, humanitarian reasons, political tendencies, religious belief. The rescuers were usually motivated by more than one reason. The rescuers, of whom only a few have been described here, prove that despite the dangers and hardship involved, it was possible to help the Jews and rescue them from the Nazi murder machine.

34

Attitudes of the Churches and Clergy toward the German Administration and Its Anti-Jewish Policy

GERMAN POLICY ON SOVIET CHURCHES

Several Christian churches were active in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, most of them in the annexed territories. Soviet policy during the period between the two world wars curtailed the influence of the churches in the “old territories.” The most influential church in these regions was the Orthodox Church, although this was divided into several separate churches that were hostile to one another. Next in size were the Catholic and Protestant churches.

The Russian Orthodox Church in the “old territories,” which was recognized by the Soviet authorities, was headed by the Patriarch in Moscow. The situation was different in the annexed territories. In the Ukraine, back in the period of the 1919 civil war, the Ukrainian nationalists declared their independence from the Patriarch in Moscow and turned their Orthodox Church into the Autocephalous Church. The Soviet authorities in east Ukraine suppressed the activity of this church, although it was active in west Ukraine during the period of Polish rule, where it became a focus for Ukrainian nationalism. Two other churches operated in the Ukraine, the Autonomous Church and the Uniate Church. The Autonomous Church loosened its ties with the Russian Orthodox Church but recognized the Patriarch in Moscow as its head. The Uniate Church maintained its own liturgy and rite and recognized the Vatican and the pope in Rome. They were active mainly in east Galicia.

The Russian Orthodox Church was predominant in Soviet (east) Belorussia. West Belorussia, until it was annexed to the Soviet Union, was under the control of the Catholic Church, and most of the priests were Poles. Lithuania was mainly Catholic, whereas Latvia and Estonia were primarily Lutheran-Protestant.

In all three Baltic states, a significant minority of the population was affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church. When, in the summer of 1940, the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic states, Sergei Voskresensky of Moscow was appointed Metropolitan of the three states, with his seat in Riga. Apart from these, there were smaller Christian communities of Baptists and of “Old Believers.”¹

Nazi Germany’s policies toward the churches in the occupied Soviet territories were influenced by its political objectives and by Hitler’s own basic position on Christianity. In one of his “table talks,” Hitler said, “The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity. Bolshevism is Christianity’s illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jews.”²

As part of his policy to obtain the support of the various nations in the occupied Soviet territories against Russia and against the Soviet regime, Alfred Rosenberg believed in supporting the national churches. Hitler was interested in maximum national and religious division. His views were expressed thus:

We must avoid having one solitary Church to satisfy the religious needs of large areas, and each village must be made into an independent sect, worshipping God in its own fashion. If some villages, as a result, wish to practice black magic, after the fashion of Negroes or Indians, we should do nothing to hinder them. In short, our policy in the wide Russian spaces should be to encourage any and every form of dissention and schism.³

This policy was defined by Rosenberg when he became minister of the east territories. In a letter to the Reichskommissar of the Ostland and Ukraine, he wrote:

1. The religious groups are categorically forbidden to occupy themselves with politics. Religious groups must be divided along national and territorial lines. . . . Territorially, religious unions should not go beyond the borders of Generalbezirk, i.e., in application to the Orthodox Church, approximately within the borders of one eparchy. . . . Precautions are recommended to be taken in regard to the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution expressing Russian national ideology.⁴

It was a policy of depoliticization and decentralization of the churches, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Germans were pleased that the three churches in the Ukraine, the Uniate, Autonomous, and the Autocephalous, had severed relations with the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow.⁵ Germany also encouraged the establishment of the Belorussian Autocephalous Church. Metropolitan Panteleimont was appointed to head the Church, and his deputy was Bishop Filofei.⁶ The German administration extended the scope of activity of the Belorussian Autocephalous Church,

and it included the region of Smolensk, which was outside of Belorussia, in order to weaken the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The German administration saw in the Autocephalous churches in Belorussia and Ukraine a useful pro-German tool.

Metropolitan Sergei remained in Riga. His policy, with the arrival of the Germans, was to oppose communism while remaining loyal to the Moscow Patriarch. The German administration kept Metropolitan Sergei in his post in order to use him for propaganda purposes, despite the fact that his appointment came from Soviet authorities. The Germans agreed to expand his activities in the areas of north Russia. In several public appeals, Metropolitan Sergei praised the German administration for its positive attitude toward religion in the occupied territories. Nonetheless, and in spite of German pressure, he avoided severing himself from the Patriarchate in Moscow. For this stance, he was executed in April 1944.⁷

THE CHURCHES WELCOME GERMAN OCCUPATION

The German invasion brought about a religious renaissance in the occupied territories. Churches were restored, and many people attended religious ceremonies. Wendy Lower wrote, “Priests who had been working in different occupations under the Soviets came out of hiding. With icons and Bible in hand, they went to German headquarters requesting permission to reestablish local parishes. . . . Ukrainians flocked to the churches.”⁸ Church leaders welcomed the German army and wished it victory. Prayers of thanks were offered up on behalf of the German army and its leader, Hitler, for their liberation from antireligious Bolshevism and for their newly granted freedom to worship.

In Lithuania, the head of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Juozapas Skvireckas and his deputy, the bishop of Kaunas, Vincentas Brizgys, expressed their support for Germany. In a telegram to Hitler, the two offered thanks for the liberation of Lithuania and promised to fight alongside Germany against Bolshevism.⁹ The German troops who entered Lvov, the capital of west Ukraine, were greeted by the head of the Uniate Church, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky. In a pastoral letter, dated July 5, 1941, Sheptytsky wrote:

The victorious German army . . . we welcome with joy and thanks for liberating us from the enemy. At this important and historic moment, I call on you . . . to be loyal to the church and to obey the authorities. Next Sunday . . . following the hymn, “We praise you, Lord,” . . . we shall bless the German army and the Ukrainian nation.¹⁰

The head of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church in the town of Kovel (Volhynia), Archbishop Polykarp, convened a “congress of divinity” (Rada Dovieria), which called for the “mobilization of the energy of the Ukrainian people to extend help to the German army, in order to achieve peace in the shortest time possible.”¹¹ In a pastoral letter, Platon, the Episcopope of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church in the town of Rovno (Volhynia), praised Hitler for “conducting a tireless and uncompromising struggle against the antireligious communist regime. . . . We shall use all means to assist the German army.”¹² The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church announced that prayers would be said at the churches on April 19–20, 1942, to mark Hitler’s birthday, and stressed “the genius of Hitler in rescuing the Ukrainian nation and all of Europe from godless communism.”¹³ Ukrainian newspapers announced prayers in churches in Kharkov for the health and success of Hitler on his birthday and a prayer of thanks on October 25, 1942, to mark the anniversary of the German occupation of the city.¹⁴ A telegram was sent by Metropolitan Sergei to Hitler on April 5, 1942, with birthday greetings and a prayer to grant him victory in the war.¹⁵

CHURCH REACTIONS TO THE JEWS AND TO GERMANY’S ANTI-JEWISH POLICIES

The churches in the occupied Soviet territories had a tradition of anti-Semitism. This tradition and the German occupation influenced their attitudes regarding Nazi policies. In the pro-German and anti-Soviet proclamations of the Church leaders, no mention was made of Jews. Nor did the proclamations contain the much hackneyed term *Judeo-Bolshevism*, which had appeared in the publications of the various collaborators. However, the church leaders’ warm greetings to the “liberating” German army—especially in the Ukraine and the Baltic states—during the early months of the German occupation had a devastating effect on the Jews. The greetings were published at a time when anti-Jewish pogroms were rife. Thousands of Jews were murdered by incited mobs, even before the Einsatzgruppen began their murderous operations. The heads of the churches were silent when their followers carried out these atrocities. Moreover, their pro-German proclamations and their blessing for the liberation from Bolshevism were understood by the faithful adherents as an encouragement to kill Jews.

The hated Soviet administration had escaped. The Jews, on the other hand, who were identified with this administration, were still around. It was easy enough, therefore, to wreak their revenge on the Jews. The ingrained anti-Semitism, coupled with pro-German and anti-Soviet slogans spouted by the church leaders, invited the pogroms and persecution. . This probably was not the intention

of the church leaders, who included Sheptytsky in Lvov, who was known as a friend of the Jews, nor of Bishop Brizgys in Kaunas, but it surely influenced the outcome. Some sources illustrate church attitudes toward the Jews. In an entry in his diary, dated June 30, 1941, a few days after the German invasion, the head of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, Archbishop I. Skvireckas, described his impressions of Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*:

The thoughts of *Mein Kampf* concerning the poisonous Bolshevik influence exercised by the Jews on the nations of the world are worthy of note. These thoughts are interesting indeed. . . . All this testifies not only to Hitler being an enemy of the Jews, but to the correctness of thoughts as well.¹⁶

The distance between this and full agreement with the steps Hitler took against the Jews is small. In Kaunas, two days after thousands of Jews had been caught and shot to death by Lithuanians at the Seventh Fort on July 9, 1941, the Germans ordered the remaining Jews to move to the ghetto. A Jewish delegation headed by Rabbi S. Snaig went to meet Bishop Brizgys, who was acting head of the Church of Lithuania. The delegation informed him that the German city commandant had told them that the Jews were to be enclosed in a ghetto in response to a demand by the Lithuanians. The Jews implored the bishop to intervene on their behalf and to deny that this was the desire of his people. Brizgys replied, "With all my regrets, I cannot do it, as it might endanger the position of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Such a responsibility I cannot take upon myself."¹⁷ The Einsatzgruppen report dated August 16, 1941, refers to Bishop Brizgys and his relations with the Jews:

The attitude of the Church regarding the Jewish question is, in general, clear. In addition, Bishop Brizgys has forbidden all clergymen to help Jews in any form whatsoever. He rejected several Jewish delegations who approached him personally and asked for his intervention with the German authorities. In the future he will not meet with any Jews at all. Conversion of Jews to the Catholic faith has not taken place so far. The Church would also object to this type of conversion. It is convinced that the Jews would not come [to be converted] out of conviction but because of the possible advantages connected with it.¹⁸

Rabbi Snaig maintained his connection with Bishop Brizgys. In April 1943 when news reached the Kaunas ghetto of the murder of Jews at Panerai near Vilnius, Snaig went to Brizgys and asked him to shelter a few hundred of the ghetto children in the monasteries. Brizgys replied that although, officially, the monasteries were subordinated to the Church, they were in fact independent and the monastery heads were not known for their pity and humanity. Brizgys advised

Snaig that it would be better to hide Jewish children in the homes of farmers in the villages. The bishop was also asked to help the Jewish council obtain a loan, which would be repaid after the war, in order to cover the cost of hiding children outside the ghetto. He refused both requests.¹⁹

In Lvov, Rabbi Yehezkel Lewin, together with two other members of the Jewish community, approached Metropolitan Sheptytsky on July 2, 1941, and asked him, as the supreme Ukrainian spiritual authority, to issue a call to the Ukrainians to stop the killings. In conclusion, Rabbi Lewin said, “You once told me, ‘I am a friend of Israel.’ You always stressed your sympathy for us. I ask of you now, that at this terrible time, show proof of your friendship and impress on the uncontrolled rabble, who are persecuting us. I am begging for the rescue of hundreds of thousands of Jews, and may almighty God repay you.”²⁰ Sheptytsky’s reply is not known, but he did not call upon the Ukrainians to stop the pogroms.²¹

On July 25, 1941, at the height of the pogrom known as “days of Petlyura,” radio Lvov broadcast Sheptytsky’s call to the Ukrainian nation to help the Germans and to cooperate with them.²² In late August 1941 Sheptytsky wrote to the Vatican: “We must support the German army that liberated us from the Soviet regime, until the successful end of this war. May God grant us once and for all the downfall of the militant, atheist communist regime.”²³

In a letter to Hitler in February 1942 Sheptytsky promised to rally the strength of the Ukrainian people on behalf of the “struggle against our common enemy, in order to achieve a new order in the Ukraine and the whole of Europe.”²⁴ Later, Sheptytsky became disillusioned with the German administration and the terror tactics it used in the Ukraine. In a letter to the pope in late August 1942 Sheptytsky wrote:

Today, the consensus throughout the country is that the German administration, probably even more than the Bolshevik, is bad, even Satanic. Over [the last] six months, not a day has gone by in which heinous crimes were not committed. The Jews are the primary victims. . . . The villagers are treated as if they were Negroes in the colonies. . . . It simply appears as if a gang of lunatics or bloodthirsty wolves are attacking the poor nation.²⁵

During the two weeks prior to this letter—August 10–23, 1942—some 50,000 Jews had been deported from Lvov to the Belzec extermination camp, where they were murdered. Sheptytsky was clearly horrified by this, and it would appear that his letter was sent in response. But the letter remained in the archives; a call to the Ukrainian people to help the deported Jews was never published. Only in November 1942 did Sheptytsky write a pastoral letter entitled “Thou Shalt not Kill.” It mentioned the basic Christian duties of love, the sanctity of human

life, and the commandment to refrain from killing.²⁶ Sheptytsky did not mention Jews, but he stressed that there was no justification for killing for political reasons. By the time this letter was circulated among the clergy of the Uniate Church in November 1942, most of the Jews of west Ukraine had already been murdered. On the other hand, there was a bloody conflict at this time in west Ukraine between Ukrainians and Poles, with the Polish inhabitants of remote villages the main victims. There was also some infighting within the Ukrainian nationalist movement.²⁷ These struggles claimed many lives, so that it is highly unlikely that Sheptytsky also referred in this letter to Jews. The main reference was to these mutual murders. The final sentence, in which he mentioned children, wives, and elderly parents remaining without anyone to support them, had no relevance to the Jews. The Jews, regardless of age or gender, had all been murdered. But even if Sheptytsky had been referring to acts of murder in general, for the Jews this was too late.

In early 1943 Sheptytsky supported the establishment of the ss Galicia Division (Galichina), which was composed of Ukrainian volunteers, as part of the Waffen-ss in the German army, whose objective it was to fight the Soviet army. He appointed priests from his church, headed by Vasil Laba, to serve as chaplains in the division's various units.²⁸

Sheptytsky's behavior in the Holocaust was inconsistent. As a friend of the Jews, he opposed Nazi policies. In his palace on Mount Iura in Lvov, he provided safe shelter to some Jews. In monasteries belonging to the Uniate Church, which were headed by Sheptytsky's brother, Clement (Kazimiezh), many dozens of Jews, especially children, found shelter.²⁹ On the other hand, Sheptytsky saw the Germans as allies in the liberation of the Ukraine from communist rule. He was the supreme Ukrainian spiritual authority in east Galicia. His calls to the Ukrainians for cooperation with Nazi Germany, to view the German army as liberators, to join them in building a new Europe, to fight shoulder to shoulder against the Bolsheviks, were construed by many Ukrainians as a call to be party to Germany's anti-Jewish policies as well. The practical results of this partnership with the Germans consisted of pogroms, large-scale volunteering to the Ukrainian police, and the active participation in the mass murder of Jews. Sheptytsky certainly did not intend for this to happen, but it did. The ideal of "a new Europe" led by Adolf Hitler, which Sheptytsky supported, was a Europe devoid of Jews. The extermination of Jews in east Galicia would no doubt have taken place without Sheptytsky's declarations, but he added more fuel to the fire of anti-Semitism.³⁰

Other religious leaders in the occupied territories, who also voiced support for the Germans and called for cooperation with them, did not extend help to

Jews. In the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church and in the Ukrainian Autonomous Church, priests delivered blatantly anti-Semitic sermons. On a Sunday in May 1942, a priest in Kovel instructed his congregation not to give so much as a piece of bread, a drop of water, or shelter to the Jews, and he said that anyone knowing of the whereabouts of Jews in hiding was to inform the Germans. The Jews must be erased from the face of the earth, he said.³¹ Before setting out to murder Jews, the Ukrainian police in Kovel went to church to pray. The church's head priest, Ivan Guba, conducted a service in praise of Hitler and called for victory over the Bolsheviks. The policemen removed their hats, and Guba sprinkled "holy water" over their heads. They then crossed themselves and walked out of the church on their way to an anti-Jewish action.³²

On May 25, 1943, on the day Semyon Petlyura was murdered, Metropolitan Teofil, head of the Autonomous Church in the Poltava and Kharkov provinces, conducted a memorial service in Kharkov, which was attended by the town's clergy and a large congregation of local inhabitants. In describing the service that was held in the town's main church, the Kharkov press pointed out that "Petlyura, whose name was connected to the struggle for the liberation of the Ukraine from Muscovite Judeo-Bolshevism, was murdered by the Jew Shalom Schwartzbard . . . and in the heart of each and every one of us there is a burning hatred for the murderers."³³

Referring to the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexander Dallin writes that in October 1942, Metropolitan Sergei made a point of inserting a few anti-Semitic remarks into his praise for the Germans for their religious tolerance in the occupied territories.³⁴ Such blatant expressions of anti-Semitism stand out against the Church leaders' silence and disregard for the extermination of the Jews.

INDIVIDUAL PRIESTS WHO HELPED JEWS

The silence of the Church and its leaders was understood on all levels of the priesthood. Most priests adopted a position compatible with that of their church: in their sermons they praised the German army for liberating them from the burden of Bolshevism and for reinstating religious freedom, and they turned a blind eye to the murder of Jews. Some actually encouraged the annihilation.³⁵ There were also priests who tried to help the persecuted Jews. They supplied Jews with new birth certificates or documents of people who had died, sheltered Jews in their homes and monasteries, or gave sermons in church pulpits describing the suffering of the Jews and condemning the perpetrators of the murders.

On September 10, 1941, following the murder of Jews in the southern

Lithuania town of Alytus, Catholic priest Jonas Gylys delivered a sermon in which he denounced the cruelty of the Germans and compared the Jews' suffering to the suffering of Christ. "The blood did not yet have time to dry, and already they rob their property," he said. The Germans reported that Gylys had gone to the synagogue without permission to console the arrested Jews on the eve of that massacre.³⁶

In a Dominican convent near Vilnius there lived nine Polish nuns; Anna Borkowska was the Mother Superior. During the first months of occupation, while the murder of thousands of Jews was going on in Vilnius, seventeen members of the Zionist youth movement were allowed to hide in the convent.³⁷ Several Jews found shelter in a Benedictine convent inside Vilnius.³⁸

Several Catholic priests in the Volhynia region helped Jews. Together with Attorney Szumski, Father Sirkiewicz of Rovno provided escaping Jews with birth and baptism certificates. The local priest at Janova-Dolina also provided baptism certificates. In his Wladimirets church, Father Dominic Wawrzynowicz preached on behalf of the Jews. Father Ludvic Wolodarczyk from a village near Slutch River helped refugees from Rokitno and its vicinity.³⁹

In the hamlet of Szczurovice in the Ternopol province, Father Stanislav Mazak saved the lives of three of the Wexler family, one day before they were due to be executed. He drove them to Warsaw, where he arranged for the boy to be given Aryan documents and be put in the care of a Polish family; the mother was supplied with Aryan documents, and she left for work in Germany. The mother and son survived. The father was killed in the Warsaw uprising.⁴⁰

Some of the clergy who helped rescue Jews, especially children, were not motivated only by humanitarian reasons. They had a mission to bring them into Christianity. In her testimony, Rachel Levin-Rosenzweig describes one such priest from Kaunas:

I went to Father [Bronius] Paukstis. . . . I broke down in tears. He comforted me and allowed me to stay in his house. . . . I understood from what he said that he was interested in rescuing children younger than me, so he could teach them Christianity. . . . But he never tried to influence me directly. . . . He would issue birth certificates and arrange for children to be placed with farmers in the villages. . . . I spent ten days in his house in July 1944, and we expected the arrival of the Russians. . . . He said to me once, after liberation, that his profit consisted of sixty or seventy children who had been baptized into Christianity and whose parents were no longer alive.⁴¹

The families of two Jewish doctors were forced to convert to Christianity as a condition for shelter in the Zemaiciu Kalvarija convent in the Telsai province.⁴²

Wide-scale attempts to survive by converting to Christianity occurred in Kremenchug in Ukraine and in Chernovtsy in Bukovine.⁴³

In the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, survival by conversion to Christianity was a limited phenomenon. Most Jews refused, and most churches felt it was contrary to German anti-Jewish policy. The priests who did it faced German punishment. But this way of rescue was a more complicated problem, because the converts, especially small children whose parents had been murdered, were not returned to the Jewish nation after the war.

Instances of rescue by priests in the “old” Soviet territories under German occupation were rare. There were very few churches in the “old” territories, and the monasteries were closed. Priests who arrived in these areas after the occupation in order to revive religious life were pro-German, totally dependent on the German administration, and unfamiliar and unconnected with the Jews. One of the few instances of Jews being saved by a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church is the story of Alexei Glagolev of Kiev.⁴⁴ Izabell Minkin-Yegorichev, who was married to a Russian and who owed her life and that of her 10-year-old daughter to Glagolev and his wife, testified:

September 29, 1941. . . . I went to my husband’s relatives and hid there for about a week. . . . My relatives on my husband’s side turned for help to the family of the Priest Alexei Glagolev. . . . Alexei Glagolev’s wife, Tatyana Pavlovna, had a desperate idea, to give her passport, birth and baptismal certificates to me. . . . By leaving herself without documents during such troubled times, Tatyana Glagolev subjected herself to great danger. . . . Late on the evening of November 29, 1941, I arrived at the Glagolev home. . . . In addition to my daughter and me, the Glagolevs helped several other Jews.⁴⁵

In most cases, the rescue of Jews by priests or monasteries/convents was based on previous contact, whether direct or indirect, between the Jews and people in the Church. It was generally necessary to have some kind of previous knowledge that a priest was friendly to the Jews and was ready to help them. The risks to both sides, the Jew seeking shelter and the clergymen who extended help, were great. This made it imperative for previous familiarity between the asylum seeker and the priest or the intervention of a reliable third party to make the connection.

The cases of rescue by priests or churches described here are only a sample. In general, it may be assumed that at least several hundred Jews, many of them children, were rescued by priests and monasteries. It was a period in which the morality of the Church was tested. The clergy should have voiced their objections to the murders and extended help to the victims, despite risks to themselves. An outcry on their part would not have changed the Germans’ annihilation

policies, but it would have influenced some of the thousands of local policemen who were members of their congregations. It might have put some of them off participating in the murder actions. Such an outcry would have inspired more local people to help Jews. No such outcry was heard. And there were reasons for this. Some of the clergymen supported the extermination of Jews. Others, like Catholic Bishop Brizgys of Lithuania, suspected that any help extended to the Jews would be harmful to their church. The churches did not raise the commandment “thou shalt not kill,” but chose silence. This silence helped the Germans and their local collaborators to carry out the mass murder of Jews unhindered. Thousands of believers, many of whom were tainted by anti-Semitism, were able to interpret, and probably chose to interpret, this silence as solidarity with the extermination of the Jews.

TEN

The Jews in Their Struggle for
Life and in Armed Resistance

35

The Individual, the Public, and Jewish Councils in a Battle for Survival

THE JEWISH INDIVIDUAL

The German invasion of the Soviet Union found the Jewish population completely unaware of what awaited them under Nazi occupation. This was expressed during the early days of the occupation, when they faced the dilemma of whether they should remain in their homes or try to get away into the depths of the Soviet Union.¹ The reaction of the Jews in the occupied territories formed in accordance with Nazi policy toward them. There was no organized response on the part of the Jewish public, nor could there have been. Each individual had to seek ways for rescuing himself and his family and, circumstances permitting, others.

Rescue conditions were extremely restricted. In face of the cruel and efficient German murder machine and a local non-Jewish population that was partly hostile and mostly indifferent, the solutions available to the Jew were few. In addition to the ever-present threat of murder actions, the Jew, closed behind ghetto walls, faced a daily struggle against starvation and disease and used the few means at his disposal in order to stay alive.

Searching for Hiding Places

In the very early days of German occupation, Jewish males were kidnapped off the streets and from their homes. At first no one knew where the men had been taken; most did not return. In time it became obvious that they had been murdered. Men went into hiding to avoid being kidnapped. Later, when the mass deportations and massacres began, people followed orders and reported to the round-up spots designated by the Germans. Sometimes the deportation was to a ghetto, but in most cases the Jews were taken to pits to be shot. As soon as it became clear that the objective of the deportations was murder, many people

went into hiding in hideouts called “malinas.” To the ghetto inhabitants, the main issue on the agenda became the preparation of a malina. Thousands were involved in the project. It was a matter of life or death and people invested time, initiative, and imagination in preparing their malinas. Malinas were built in cellars, attics, in the spaces between double walls, underground, inside chimneys, and in drainpipes. Sometimes a camouflaged room could serve as a malina.

The malinas differed in size and ranged from a cubbyhole that barely housed one person—like a chimney—to a place large enough to house dozens of people, especially in hidden cellars or attics. Families prepared their own malinas, and groups worked on larger malinas to accommodate larger numbers of people. The ghettos in the larger towns and cities, where apartment blocks stood close to each other, provided better space for malinas than the townships where people lived in small detached wooden houses.

The basic rule in preparing a malina was secrecy. No one else was to know about its existence, not even the neighbors who were not going to use it. Even among those who were going to hide in the malina, knowledge of its existence and location was restricted to senior family members. There was always the fear of people being caught and tortured by the Germans into choosing between death or giving away the whereabouts of the malina. The Germans usually knew of its existence but not its location. Many malinas were discovered in this way. There were instances of people getting wind of their neighbors’ malinas. When the time came to hide, the neighbor would appear, often with his family, threatening to inform the Germans if they were denied entry. Thus, although the malina was designed to hold a certain number of people, it often became necessary to stuff in additional people. A malina was supposed to enable its inhabitants to hide away for days and sometimes weeks; it had to contain water and food and enough air to breathe.

Despite the lack of contact between the ghettos, in all of them there evolved a need for hiding places, and throughout the period in which the ghettos were in existence, people were involved in preparing and improving their malinas. One of the major dangers for people in the malinas was the presence of babies. When Germans and local police were carrying out house-to-house searches, absolute silence was imperative. Yitzhak Rudashewski, who as a youth experienced an action in the Vilnius ghetto in September 1941, wrote in his diary:

The hiding place was entered through a hole in the wall of the apartment. . . . We are like animals surrounded by hunters. . . . The knocking of smashed locks, doors creaking, axes. . . . Suddenly the sound of a baby crying from somewhere above. A desperate groan issues forth from everyone’s mouth. We’re finished. In desperation, someone shoves a sugar cube in the child’s

mouth, but it doesn't help. He is covered with cushions. The child's mother weeps. People call out in extreme anxiety: suffocate the child. The Lithuanians bang harder at the walls, gradually things calm down. We understand that they have gone.²

Often, the crying of a child would cast the die for the inhabitants of a malina. Of one incident that took place during the liquidation of the ghetto at Brest-Litovsk in mid-October 1942, it was written that "70 people were squeezed into a cellar that had enough room only for 35. . . . Sunday, about 10 o'clock. . . . At that very moment there was the sound of a baby crying. . . . Suddenly one of the searchers calls out joyfully: 'I can hear a baby crying.' . . . He hurls a grenade into the cellar and shouts: 'Get out.' . . . About 40 people had already gone up."³

A dreadful incident occurred in a hiding place in the Korets ghetto in Volhynia, when a baby started crying. One of the people in the malina began strangling the child right in front of her mother, and blood poured from her nose and mouth. The mother decided to hand herself over to the Germans. "My conscience does not permit me to stay here with you," she said as she left the hiding place with her child.⁴

A well concealed malina was used several times by its "owners." After an action the Jews emerged from the malina and blended in with the people left behind by the Germans as a workforce. The malina in those cases served as temporary shelters only until the end of the action. In places where the ghetto had been liquidated along with its entire Jewish population, the malina was no longer a life-saving option. The house-to-house searches conducted by police for days and weeks following a murder action, the local inhabitants who came to loot anything left behind by the Jews, breaking down walls and forcing open cellars, ensured that no malinas remained undiscovered. Those houses which were not destroyed were handed over to the local population, who soon discovered in them the hiding places used by the Jews. A major problem in planning a malina was the matter of concealing its entrance, whether this was to be achieved by the people already inside or by someone willing to risk doing the job from the outside. Eva Sliapoberska-Dov from the town of Ilinty in the Vinnitsa province in the Ukraine recalls, "On May 15 [1942], we heard shots, we went down to the malina. One of us had to remain on the outside in order to conceal the entrance to the malina by placing a chicken pen against it. The first victim was my grandfather, Einich Pikhotnik. He managed to put the chicken pen in place just as the Germans burst into the apartment and took Grandfather away."⁵

Many thousands of Jews hiding in malinas survived the various actions. Around 20,000 Jews remained alive in the Vilnius ghetto at the end of actions that took place between July and December 1941, among them 13,000 holders of work

permits and 7,000 “illegals” who survived thanks to the malinas.⁶ It was a temporary rescue, but it provided a way to continue the struggle for life.

In ghettos, where the inhabitants were aware of the imminent arrival of the liberating Soviet army, malinas were prepared for longer stays, involving weeks and even months. Since this entailed storing food and water, the malina had to be very well hidden, usually underground. Liquidation of the Kaunas ghetto/concentration camp and other camps in the region and deportation of the remaining Jews to Germany began on July 8, 1944, about three weeks before the city was liberated. Many of the Jews went into hiding in previously prepared malinas. In an attempt to apprehend them, the Germans set fire to some of the ghetto’s buildings. Jews escaping the burning buildings were shot.⁷ Twenty-six people hid for nine months inside a pit in the Minsk ghetto. Half of them survived to see the liberation of the city.⁸

Although a temporary measure, the malinas were used by thousands of Jews in all the ghettos. They did not provide a long-term mass-rescue solution, and only a relatively few (several thousand at most) of the Jews who hid in them survived for several months until liberation.

Employment with a Schein: Temporary Means for Survival

Already in the early days of occupation, the Jews became aware of the fact that everyone taken to work for the local German administration, or employed in army workshops, was issued certificates—*Scheinen*—proving that they worked in these places. The Jews soon learned that in many cases, holders of Scheinen and their families were not included in the murder actions. For them and for their families, the Schein provided a life insurance, at least temporarily. Under conditions in which everyone was fighting for his and his family life, the race was on to obtain a Schein. People did not balk at begging, threatening, and even offering bribes in order to obtain one. Scheinen were issued only in certain regions, especially in places under German civil administration. In areas where there was total annihilation of the Jews during the very earliest stages of the occupation, no Scheinen were issued.

During the first weeks of German occupation, anyone with Jews in his employ issued his own Scheinen. As the German administration stabilized, authority to issue Scheinen was taken over by the labor exchange, which was part of the local German administration, and their number became restricted. The German administration allocated a certain number of Scheinen to the Jewish councils for distributing among their members, the ghetto police, and other providers of essential services in the ghetto, such as doctors, nurses, plumbers, etc. The number of these Scheinen was limited, and Jews waged a bitter battle over them.

On September 16, 1941, the Gebietskommissar of Kaunas gave the Jewish council 5,000 Scheinen. Each of these bore the legend “Certificate for a skilled Jewish worker” (*Ausweis für Jüdische Handwerker*) and was signed, “Jordan, SA Hauptsturmführer.” These certificates became known as Jordan Scheinen. According to the Gebietskommissar, the certificates were to be distributed among the Jews working in some of the German enterprises and their families. The following day, distribution began and then requests arrived at the Jewish council from some German enterprises employing Jews, demanding that their workers be issued “life certificates.” The Jewish council understood immediately the significance of the Scheinen—the Germans had decided to leave 5,000 Jews alive, and the remaining 24,000 ghetto Jews were to be exterminated. According to a witness:

This information spread through the ghetto like wildfire. . . . Thousands of people stormed the Jewish council with passionate demands [for] certificates. . . . Thousands of men and women, gripped with fear, wept, begged, threatened, fought each other, and cursed the people responsible for issuing the certificates. It is easy enough to understand what was going through those people’s minds, having to determine who would live and who would die. . . . A radical proposal emerged within the Jewish council—to return all the Jordan Scheinen to the Germans and to tell them that the Jewish council sees no way it can distribute them. . . . It became known immediately that the Jewish council was considering this proposal and large numbers of skilled workers began protesting vehemently, “What right do you have to deny me and my family the possibility of staying alive?” and demanded the certificates they were entitled to. . . . After further discussion, the Jewish council came to the conclusion that they did not have the moral right to pass a sentence of death on those 5,000 Jews who, for the time being, had a chance of being saved.⁹

In the “grand action” of October 28, 1941, in Kaunas, selection was not carried out according to holders of Scheinen. People who looked as if they were fit to work, and their families, were returned to the ghetto, while all the others were led to the pits and murdered. There were many cases of Jews bribing their employers in order to obtain a Schein. According to M. Balberiszsky, who worked for a German military unit in Vilnius:

We approached our German officer. . . . He promised to obtain Scheinen at least for some of us. Then the race was on. It was every man for himself [to obtain a Schein]. He was offered money, diamonds, etc. In the end he made up a list of eight people, including myself. . . . A few days later we learned that our unit was not allowed to employ Jews.¹⁰

Dr. Meir Dworzecki described how he and other doctors waited in the Jewish council offices, where the decision was being made as to which of them was to receive one of the few Scheinen allocated to the ghetto doctors:

The decision was between myself and my old friend Dr. Kolodner. We sat, the two of us, in the semidark corridor of the Jewish council and awaited our sentence. We talked, each knowing that the document-to-life for one was a sentence-of-death to the other. . . . I was issued with a document-of-life—and my friend was doomed. I was ashamed to meet his eye, but I took the certificate: for myself, for my wife, and to rescue my sister. . . . He held out his hand in farewell and said that it was not my fault that he did not receive the certificate, such was fate.¹¹

In the Siauliai ghetto, allocation of Scheinen took place on September 13, 1941. The procedure was overseen by the Lithuanian Liuberskis. The people were required to pass before him, and he determined their fate: which of the Jews would receive a certificate and be allowed to remain in the ghetto with his close family, and which of them would be removed to the synagogue and from there to the pits. A witness wrote about events that day in the ghetto, “old people went into hiding or disguised themselves—dyed their hair, smoothed out their wrinkles, shaved off their beards, and did all sorts of cosmetic tricks . . . but they did not all succeed in ‘fooling’ the wily chairman [Liuberskis], and many of them were led straight to the synagogue.”¹²

In Minsk, in the course of murder actions, attention was not always paid to the holders of Scheinen. When an enterprise was interested in preserving their Jewish workers, they would keep them outside the ghetto when an action was to take place until the action was over. The families of such workers remained in the ghetto and, like all the other Jews, were included in the action.¹³

In places where it was distributed, the Schein was for use by the person to whom it was issued and his close family: his spouse and children. Often the Germans restricted the number of children to two. Some of the Schein holders were unmarried or in childless marriages. Fictitious marriages were arranged, and childless couples “adopted” the children of their relatives or friends. The Jewish council and ghetto police were party to these arrangements. Often complete strangers bought their way into these fictitious families.¹⁴

In the Riga ghetto Scheinen were issued to Jews who worked for various government bodies. However, the certificates did not determine which of the Jews would remain alive after the late November–early December 1941 mass murders. About 4,000 young men and 300 women who were fit for work were moved into the “small ghetto” and left there. All the others were murdered. The Scheinen

had no bearing on this action. People's lives depended on their age and on their ability to work.¹⁵

In all the ghettos, Jews strove for employment in places that provided them with a Schein, which gave them hope that they would stay alive a little while longer.¹⁶

Rescue among the Local Population

Jewish individuals, with or without their families, also had the option of seeking help from non-Jews. If extended, this help took two forms: a hiding place or Aryan documents. Once in hiding, the Jews had to disappear for as long as Germany occupied the area; under false Aryan identity, the Jew had to integrate himself into the gentile population and avoid being recognized as a Jew. In order for a Jewish individual and his family to find shelter on the Aryan side, he needed help of a local non-Jew who was willing to hide Jews. For the non-Jewish rescuer, this involved putting their lives in jeopardy.¹⁷

In order for a Jew to be integrated into a non-Jewish environment and to disguise himself as an Aryan (or a Muslim), it was imperative to obtain Aryan identity papers. For this it was generally necessary to enlist the help of someone in the local non-Jewish community. In addition to Aryan documentation, it was necessary to look like an Aryan, to have command of the local language (Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc.), and be familiar with the local religious ritual (Christian or Muslim). There were few among the Jews who possessed these qualities. The Jew had to find a place in a town or a village where no one knew him and a suitably believable cover story as to why he had to relocate to a new place. It was also necessary to find accommodation and employment. According to German law, all inhabitants, landlords, and doormen were obliged to report to the authorities on anyone who had not lived in the vicinity prior to German occupation. This in itself presented a serious obstacle to any Jew trying to blend into a non-Jewish environment. The obligation of the local population to be employed and the fact that certain age groups were sent to work in Germany forced the Jewish asylum seeker to come in contact with the German authorities responsible for employment. He had to present documents, including birth certificates, identity papers, etc. He would have to obtain the food coupons allocated to the population in the occupied territories in order to receive the supplies necessary for his survival. The neighbors would have been suspicious of anyone not applying for these coupons. In both cases, he would have been required to come in contact with the German administration, with its attendant dangers. It was very difficult under such circumstances to hide one's Jewishness; this was true especially for circumcised men.

In adopting an Aryan identity, the Jew was, to a large degree, dependent on

the local people's attitude toward Jews. A Jew could pass as an Aryan vis-à-vis the German authorities, but it was much harder (and even impossible) to hide his true identity from the local population, even in places where no one had known him beforehand. As a youth, Shalom Eilati attempted to hide his Jewish identity when he was smuggled out of the Kaunas ghetto a few weeks before liberation and brought to the home of a Lithuanian farmer, who told him on the way to his new home that although he did not look like a Jew, his accent in Lithuanian might pose a problem. He decided, therefore, to present the young Eilati as a refugee from Latvia with a speech impediment. Eilati wrote:

By presenting me as deaf-mute I would be freed from the danger of having to speak. . . . I had only just put down my things and they invited me to the table. . . . They all stared at the strange creature their landlord had brought home. . . . My urban clothing and manners and my odd behavior were a puzzle to them. . . . Evening came and I was called once again to the dining table. There was a stranger there who tried to draw me into conversation. It was a neighbor, a friend. . . . He started asking me questions . . . and then the neighbor had the idea of trying to communicate with me in writing. . . . Stupidly, I was tempted into complying, to the wonder of everyone present, and in fluent Lithuanian. . . . My disguise had failed. . . . Out of respect to their master, or maybe out of basic humanity, they kept the secret.¹⁸

Of the fairly large number of Jews who tried to escape by hiding their identity and were subsequently caught—mostly through betrayal—no testimony remains. They took their stories with them to their graves. Significant portions of the local population, whether out of anti-Semitism or for other reasons, used to inform the Germans of the presence of such Jews.¹⁹ It is impossible to estimate the number of Jews who managed to survive as Aryans in the occupied Soviet territories. There were possibly several thousand.

Escape to Other Ghettos

Since the extermination actions were not carried out simultaneously in all the ghettos, Jews who escaped before or during the actions tried to find shelter in other ghettos, where at that particular time it was a more secure situation. During the second half of 1941, most of the Lithuanian Jews were murdered, but in Belorussia at that time, most of the Jews were still alive. Some lived inside closed ghettos and some in localities where ghettos were not yet established. In those months Jews from Vilnius ghetto escaped to ghettos in Belorussia. In Lida there were about 750 Jewish refugees from Vilna and in Voronovo about 300. When in spring-summer 1942 a wave of extermination actions swept through

Generalkommissariat Belorussia, Jews tried to find refuge in Bezirk Bialystok, where at that time it was relatively quiet.²⁰ These refugees usually received help from the local Jewish councils or from relatives and friends who lived there. But from the German point of view they were illegal inhabitants in these ghettos, and when they were caught they were executed, together with members of the council who had extended them help. In Lida 60 refugees from Vilna and 6 members of the council were executed, along with the chief of the Jewish ghetto police, who had furnished them with false papers saying that they were Lida residents. It happened in March 1942.²¹ Most information that reached the ghetto population about the German extermination actions was from such refugees

THE JEWISH COUNCILS AND DAILY LIFE IN THE GHETTOS

In order to survive in the ghetto, the Jew, whether individually or as part of a family, required either a *malina* or a *Schein*. One of them, at least, was necessary, but this was not sufficient. The Jews in the closed ghetto also needed food, housing, medicines, etc. All this required organization, cooperation, and communal effort; that was the leading role of the Jewish councils.

From the first day of their establishment, the Jewish councils in the occupied Soviet territories operated under the daily threat of murder actions. It was a different reality from that in the General Government and all the other regions of German-occupied Europe, where for most of the time the Jewish councils did not operate under the shadow of total physical annihilation. There, the annihilation was the final act in the persecution and came at a relatively late stage.

The Jewish councils had been established by the German administration as an institution and a tool for carrying out Germany's anti-Jewish policies. It was their job to serve as a channel through which the German administration could pass on its orders to the ghetto inhabitants.²² The council was given a narrow margin that meandered between meticulous execution of German orders, whose objective was maximum exploitation of the Jews prior to murdering them, and taking care of the ghetto inhabitants' day-to-day needs, while working with them to prolong the very existence of the ghetto and the people there.

The German administration had no need for Jewish councils in most of the places in which total annihilation took place within the first weeks of occupation. Typical of this is the murder of the Jews of Kiev as well as of those in most parts of the old territories. The German administration did not need the cooperation of Jewish councils in closing the Jews in ghettos. This was carried out mostly by local police, who passed from house to house ordering or banishing Jews into

an area designated as a ghetto. The Jews of Vilnius and Riga were treated in this manner. In Kaunas and Minsk, the Jewish council took part in transferring Jews to the ghettos; in such cases, people were given more time for the move and allowed to take more property with them. The method used for ghettoizing depended on the local German authorities, and it was they who determined the level of cooperation—if at all—with the Jewish council.²³

The councils' activity was varied. In part, their activity fell within the traditional spheres dealt with by the traditional Jewish community (*kehila*); in other cases their activity lay in spheres that were never experienced by the Jewish community leadership in the prewar period. These new spheres of activity were imposed upon them partly by the German administration and partly by the reality of ghetto life. It is these that dictated the structure of the Jewish council and its departments. Some of the departments were formed with the establishment of the Jewish council, and others evolved over time, in accordance with problems that arose during the existence of the ghettos. Although no central body, Jewish or German, existed that determined the structure of the Jewish council, it was similar in almost all the ghettos, since their problems were similar.

The first Jewish council departments dealt with housing, food, health, burial, and employment. The ghetto police was established early on. The labor office and the ghetto police were formed in accordance with German demands and did not traditionally fall within the sphere of the Jewish communities. The labor office was required to supply the Germans with Jewish workers. The ghetto police were entrusted with maintaining order in the ghetto and provided the Jewish council with a tool for carrying out German demands.

The departments for housing, food, health, and burial provided solutions for the immediate problems that arose when the Jews were closed in ghettos and cut off from the non-Jewish environment. The departments that were later established within the Jewish councils were not of immediate need and dealt with welfare, education, and culture.

Housing for the Ghetto Inhabitants

From the first day the Jews were closed in ghettos, there arose an urgent need for a solution to the housing problem. The area designated for the ghetto was very small in relation to the number of people who had to inhabit it, and overcrowding was rife. Some families managed to take over apartments as soon as they arrived in the ghetto, while others were left to live on the streets, in attics, on staircases, or in yards. The housing departments, often helped by the ghetto police, handled the distribution of available housing. Often several families were obliged to share a single room. Dov Rabin described life in the Grodno ghetto:

In Schulhof and Triotse [areas in the ghetto] overcrowding was severe even at the normal times . . . and now thousands were crowded in, less than one square meter to a person. Well connected or better-off people were still able to make use of their connections or their money and managed to obtain a somewhat better apartment. Thousands of people grasped at any available sheltered corner: . . . in a cellar, an attic, or in a ramshackle lean-to exposed to the cold. . . . In order to avoid corruption a special ‘housing committee’ was established . . . and within 2–3 weeks no one remained in the ghetto without a roof over his head, even if the crowding was unbearable.²⁴

Dworzecki wrote about the housing department in the Vilnius ghetto: “In order to solve the housing problem and to increase the housing area in the ghetto, many houses were rebuilt. Warehouses were restored and turned into apartments . . . cellars and attics were turned into apartments.”²⁵ The situation was similar in other ghettos.²⁶ In ghettos where Jews had been brought in from neighboring townships and villages, the housing departments were responsible for finding homes for them all. People were housed in synagogues or other public buildings, if these were included in the ghetto area.

Heating was a major problem in the ghetto. The winter of 1941–42 was particularly harsh, and temperatures dropped to minus 30°C. Jews used the few pieces of furniture they had brought with them as firewood. They dismantled fences, uprooted trees, and removed window frames from ruined houses. The Germans forbade the dismantling of fences and ruined houses. But the people’s suffering was greater than the ban, and they went out at night, in and outside of the ghetto, scavenging for firewood. Often people were shot by the sentries who surrounded the ghetto.

The overcrowding and the cold made life miserable, but thanks to the Jewish councils’ housing departments and the solidarity among the inhabitants of the ghetto, no Jew remained without a roof over his head.

The War on Hunger

Even greater than the housing problem in the ghetto was that of obtaining food. After the murder actions, the main enemy in the ghetto was hunger, which brought in its wake diseases. For the ghetto Jews, the Jewish council was the main factor from which and through which the inhabitants sought solutions to the food problem. The Jewish council food department was responsible for obtaining and distributing essential foodstuffs. Food arrived at the ghetto legally, in the form of rations allocated by the German administration; it was also smuggled in illegally. Rations for Jews were about half, or less, than those allocated to the non-Jewish population. This allocation, too, was given only to workers and their families, who

lived “legally” in the ghetto. Those Jews who had survived the various actions in malinas, and whose presence in the ghetto was “illegal,” received no food rations from the Germans. The “legal” food rations were given to the Jewish council, which in turn distributed them among the workers. Rations were not uniform in size and content and were determined by the local German administration. In some places, the local administration realized that, in order to best exploit the Jewish workforce, food should be allocated to people in employment. As the Generalkommissar of Belorussia wrote to the Gebietskommissar of Baranovichi on February 9, 1942:

In Highway [*Durchgangsstrasse*] number 7, Brest Litovsk-Slutsk, and number 8, Slonim-Baranovichi-Slutsk-Minsk, Jews and locals are employed by Feldkommandatur 250 in Baranovichi and some Ortskommandanturs, in constructing camps. The Ortskommandanturs are complaining that the Jews’ efficiency is low, and many of them are collapsing in the course of their work. Since this work is extremely important, in order to maintain the workforce employed in this work, they must each be supplied, every day, 250 grams of bread and 500 grams of potatoes. In addition, it is possible to supply them with hot soup from the communal kitchen.²⁷

The German army was in great need of these strategic roads, which led to the front of Army Group Center, which was under attack at that time by the Soviet army and was forced to retreat. It was against this background that this letter was sent.

Weekly food allocations in the ghettos for people classified as “legal” were starvation rations, as detailed in mid-1942 data:

- A. Kaunas ghetto: bread—for workers, 1.4 kg, for others [family members]—700 grams. Horse meat—250 grams, for others 125 grams. Fat—for workers, 40 grams, for others—122.5 grams, tea or tea substitute—75 grams.²⁸
- B. Vilnius ghetto: bread—for workers, 1.3 kg, for others—650 grams. Flour—20 grams. Barley—6 grams. Sugar—12 grams. Meat—18 grams. Fat—10 grams.²⁹
- 3. Minsk ghetto: bread—625 grams. Barley—150 grams. Flour—250 grams.³⁰
- 4. Ghettos in Volhynia: bread—for workers 700–1,000 grams, for others—700 grams. (No details are given on other supplies.)³¹

These rations amounted to between 400 and 600 calories a day, which is less than one-quarter of the calories required daily by a working person in order to survive.

The condition of the “illegals” who received no food rations whatsoever was even worse. Without any kind of help from the Jewish council, there was no way for them to survive. The Jewish councils’ food departments were allowed occasionally to make purchases of quantities of food, especially potatoes, and to bring them into the ghetto. But these were tiny quantities, not enough to provide any significant improvement in the situation. The only way the ghetto inhabitants — “legal” as well as “illegal” — could survive was by smuggling food. This smuggling operation was carried out by workers who came back to the ghetto at the end of a day’s work and people who had become professional smugglers. The Jewish councils also purchased food illegally outside the ghetto and smuggled it in. Food smuggling was extremely dangerous, and any Jews caught in the act by the German or local police were executed. The professional smugglers bribed the local policemen to permit their smuggling activity when they were on guard duty at the ghetto gates. Even Jewish policemen accepted bribes on occasion. On food smuggling in the Vilnius ghetto, M. Balberiszsky wrote:

Groups of smugglers were in contact with the Jewish police and the non-Jewish police sentries on the ghetto gates. These smugglers brought wagons full of food into the ghetto. All kinds of vehicles were used for this: handcarts for removing garbage from the ghetto and handcarts that carried out the dead, etc. . . . But the main smuggler was the Jewish council. It became customary to smuggle in large quantities of food that the Jewish council bought from Lithuanians at the same time as “legal” food rations were being delivered to the ghetto.³²

Food smuggling was carried out by Jewish councils in other ghettos, too.³³ People working outside the ghetto managed to obtain small quantities of food for their families by bartering objects they had brought with them to the ghetto; these objects dwindled with time. Food smuggled in by professional smugglers was sold at high prices and only the better-off ghetto inhabitants could afford to purchase them. The food did not reach the poorer ghetto inhabitants, among whom were many of the intelligentsia, whose professions made it impossible for them to find jobs among the skilled laborers. Their survival depended mainly on the Jewish council food rations or on food they managed to purchase cheaply. Food smuggling into the ghetto, which the Germans coined “black market dealings,” was often mentioned in German reports. The Einsatzgruppen report dated April 10, 1942, referred to events in Volhynia-Podolia:

The Jews in the towns are at present concentrated in so-called Jewish quarters which are, however, not completely isolated. Therefore, a very active black market flourished in the Jewish quarters: peasants who came to town exchanged

clothing and household articles [which they needed urgently] for agricultural products. This nuisance was eliminated through strict police measures.³⁴

Through the food and welfare departments in most of the ghettos, the Jewish councils operated soup kitchens. Tikva Fatal-Knaani describes how such soup kitchens in Grodno “filled an extremely important function. . . . The raw ingredients were supplied by the food department. . . . There were days on which the soup kitchen in the ghetto supplied up to 3,000 meals. . . . For hundreds of families, this meal constituted the only cooked food they ate. Payment for the meals was token. The poor and destitute were authorized by the welfare department to receive free meals.”³⁵

In some ghettos there were gardens and empty plots of land; these were requisitioned by the food department for growing vegetables. Cemeteries that came within the ghetto confines were used for the same purpose. Youths were recruited to protect the plots against inhabitants coming to pick unripe produce. The Jewish councils encouraged people to grow vegetables on even the tiniest patches of land adjacent to their homes.³⁶

In ghettos in the smaller towns, where security was generally less stringent and contact with the non-Jewish population was easier, the food situation was better than in the larger ghettos. Thanks to the Jewish councils’ food and welfare departments in the ghettos, there was no mass starvation.

Health and Hygiene

Living conditions in the ghettos were horrific. The Germans usually chose the more neglected parts of the cities in which to establish the Jewish ghettos; the overcrowding was terrible, and the water supply and sewers, which had been bad enough at the beginning, were not built to serve the large numbers of people forced into the ghetto. Garbage was piled high in gardens and on the streets. Inadequate sanitation, coupled with a shortage of food, warm clothing, firewood, and washing facilities, together with fleas and lice, created a perfect breeding ground for sickness and disease. Epidemics were a danger to the very existence of the ghetto. Fearing the spread of disease to the non-Jewish population and their military personnel, the German administration chose the easiest option of liquidating the ghetto and everyone in it.

Aware of the risk of epidemics, one of the first acts carried out by the Jewish councils was the establishment of departments of health. There was no shortage of doctors and nurses in the ghettos, so staffing the medical services was not a problem. In order to avoid the spread of disease, the departments of health operated sanitation teams, whose main task was to maintain personal cleanliness both in and out of the home. Lectures were given on cleanliness and the war on

infectious diseases. Public bathhouses were built, and people were obliged to visit them several times each month and were provided with a certificate proving that they had been. In some ghettos, people were refused food rations until they could supply proof that they been to the bathhouse. The sanitation teams were given police authority to impose fines on matters within their sphere of responsibility. On the activity of the sanitation teams in the Grodno ghetto, which is typical of other ghettos, it has been said: "Sanitary [officials] checked the cleanliness of each house, the children and the adults and the sheets. They distributed bars of soap and helped the old and the weak to wash themselves."³⁷

Thanks to the sanitation teams, there were no large-scale epidemics that jeopardized the ghettos' existence, and in many places the level of cleanliness was higher inside the ghetto than outside.³⁸ In some of the ghettos hospitals were established. In the Vilnius ghetto the hospital had the following departments: internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, gynecology, X-ray, and laboratory. It had a staff of 150, and over 3,000 patients were admitted during 1942 alone.³⁹

Hospitals were sometimes a dangerous place for the medical staff and the patients hospitalized in them. On October 4, 1941, the Germans burned down the Infectious Diseases Hospital in the Kaunas ghetto, with all the doctors, nurses, and patients in it.⁴⁰ In summer 1941 the Germans murdered the medical staff and all the patients in the Minsk ghetto hospital in Obuvna Street. According to the testimony of Frieda Levin-Slutsak, a typhus patient at the hospital, "ss men, dressed in white coats, surrounded all the wards, except the typhus [ward], and went in and fired submachine guns at the patients in their beds. Many tried to escape, jumped from the windows, but the bullets caught up with them."⁴¹ Notwithstanding the dangers they faced, the hospitals continued to operate in the ghettos. Garfunkel described the problems that the ghetto hospital in Kaunas had to contend with:

The question of medical assistance deteriorated after October 4, 1941, when the Germans burned down the Infectious Diseases Hospital. . . . After much deliberation, the Jewish council decided to reopen a hospital with a capacity of eighty beds. . . . It lacked sterilizing equipment, and it was necessary to sterilize surgery tools on the kitchen range. . . . There were no arrangements for feeding the patients, and they had to make do with the meager food brought in by their relatives. . . . An especially severe problem was that of infectious diseases that were discovered from time to time in the ghetto, especially typhus and typhoid. It was impossible to bring such patients into the hospital for fear that if it became known to the Germans, the consequences for the ghetto would be terrible. . . . The ghetto Jews, too, did not need to know that there

were infectious diseases among them. When a Jew became ill with an infectious disease, the name of the disease was kept from him, and he was told he had something else.⁴²

Conditions in the smaller ghettos did not always allow the establishment of a hospital. In some ghettos, sick rooms were established with a small number of beds; in other ghettos, doctors did their best to treat their patients in their own homes. The shortage of medicines was severe and the Germans did not supply the ghettos with medicines. The only way to obtain medicines was by purchasing them at inflated prices out of the ghetto and smuggling them in. Although this was done in all the ghettos, there remained a chronic shortage.⁴³

In spite of the ghetto medical services, the death toll was much higher than before the war, despite the fact that the average age of the ghetto inhabitants was relatively young, older and weaker people having been the first victims of the Nazi murder actions.⁴⁴ Still, thanks to the medical services, which were conducted under extremely harsh conditions, there were no mass epidemics of infectious diseases.

Burial Societies

One of the departments established by the Jewish council was the burial department, whose job it was to bury those who died a “natural death.” When used in the ghetto, this term was not the same as “natural death” in the days before the German occupation, when old age was a common cause of death. Most cases of death in the ghetto involved people who had not survived the harsh conditions—hunger, disease, cold, beatings and persecution, etc. The burial departments were also responsible for burying people who had been shot to death inside the ghettos. In some ghettos, the dead were buried in separate graves, in others, mass graves were the custom. Garfunkel described burials in Kaunas, where conditions were relatively better than in other places:

The dead were buried in a cemetery within the ghetto. . . . The Germans had issued a strict warning against erecting headstones on graves or even wooden signs. Their orders were that the ground was to be leveled so that no sign of a grave remains. After many appeals, they agreed to mark graves with numbers. After a while, the Germans stopped forcing the matter, and the ghetto Jews began erecting wooden headstones inscribed in Hebrew and Yiddish.⁴⁵

The German ban on headstones and the order to flatten the ground over graves was aimed at erasing any future evidence of Jewish existence in the area. The number of deaths in Lvov was relatively large. According to Eliahu Yones, “At times, the monthly death toll came to 600. The funeral lounges at the old

cemetery on Rapoport Street were constantly full, and bodies were often laid out in the yard awaiting their turn for burial. . . . The rabbis agreed to bury corpses in mass graves, one on top of the other.”⁴⁶ The families of the deceased were not allowed access to the cemetery, which was usually outside the ghetto walls. This “privilege” was granted only to the staff of the burial department.

Welfare

Many of the ghetto inhabitants had been welfare cases even before moving to the ghetto. And there were others who were driven by life in the ghetto to become welfare cases. They all needed help from the welfare department, which operated as part of the Jewish council. The welfare departments worked closely with the food departments in establishing the communal soup kitchens, and it was they who provided the needy with food coupons with which they were given food, either free of charge or for a token payment. The welfare departments also supplied clothing, bedding, and basic utensils to those who had been deported to the ghetto from neighboring townships.

The welfare departments collected clothing and other necessities from among the inhabitants in order to distribute them among those who had arrived at the ghetto without anything. In some ghettos, the welfare departments operated repair workshops for restoring the donated clothing. The welfare departments also arranged free medical treatment for the needy, ran the Jewish council orphanages in many of the ghettos, and provided food, medicines, and clothing to Jews in labor camps in the vicinity of the ghetto, where conditions were usually harsher than inside the ghettos.

Public aid committees were established in some ghettos to provide extra help to the needy. Such committees collected funds and clothes from those capable of donating.⁴⁷

A branch of the Jewish Self-Aid Public Society (Zydowska Samopomoc Spoieczna), whose main office was in Krakow, was established in the Lvov ghetto.⁴⁸ Although the Germans made it difficult for the Lvov branch to maintain contact with Krakow, several consignments of food and medicines arrived in Lvov, weighing more than a ton. Only a small part of this consignment was handed over to the Jews; most of it was distributed by the local authorities to Ukrainians and Poles.⁴⁹

For the vast majority of the ghetto inhabitants, the situation was grim, but in all the ghettos there was activity to help those whose situation was even worse. It was an expression of human values and Jewish solidarity, even in the tragic reality of those days. But neither the social welfare departments nor the aid organized by public bodies could solve the problems of the needy. The number

of Jews needing help was too great, and the means available were far too limited. Nonetheless, humanitarian acts helped many, encouraged them, and reduced the death toll from hunger and disease.

Education and Culture

In some ghettos the murder actions were followed by a period of nonviolence, and it was then possible for the Jewish council and the ghetto population to deal with education and culture. With the adults busy at work, children (many of them orphaned by the murder actions) wandered the streets of the ghetto aimlessly and without parental supervision, and there was a danger of them being dragged into crime. There was concern as to the future of these children if they were to grow up without an education.

During 1942 and up to mid-1943, there was relative calm in the ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas in Generalkommissariat Lithuania, a condition essential for educational and cultural activity to take place. It was in these ghettos, too, that most of this activity was concentrated. Yosef Gar wrote:

The Jewish council faced the grim question of whether it was not too great a danger to concentrate a large number of children in one place—even if only for a few hours a day. We were all afraid of the wild animal in the soul of the Nazis. Technical problems were also an obstacle: how to find buildings suitable to house a school in the terrible overcrowding that was the ghetto? But the desire to make it possible for the ghetto children not to be idle from their studies settled the issue. . . . The children themselves were happy to go to school and to study there. . . . The number of pupils grew and was nearly 500 in the two schools. The languages in the schools were Hebrew and Yiddish. . . . The greatest blow to the ghetto education program was the August 26, 1942, German order that forbade any kind of education in the ghetto. . . . Small groups of young children continued their studies clandestinely in private apartments. After a short hiatus, public school was also resumed in the ghetto—under the guise of a vocational school. . . . In fact this school became a regular elementary school with the addition of a few vocational studies, such as welding, carpentry, metalworking, needlework, etc. This school continued operating until the last day of the ghetto, alongside a choir, a drama group, and a ballet troupe.⁵⁰

School in the Vilnius ghetto began on a regular basis in late November 1941 at the initiative of the Jewish council, together with teachers and public leaders. The Jewish council's education department was established only in February 1942. Two elementary schools operated in the ghetto, with a student body of between

700 and 900 children. The pupils were ages 5 through 12. A few dozen attended a religious school. A high school was also opened in the ghetto, consisting of four classes with a student body of 100. In March 1943, Jacob Gens, the council chairman, established a central authority to care for children whose parents were out working all day and for the children's homes and orphanages.⁵¹ No schools were established in other ghettos in the occupied Soviet territories because of the hardships and dangers described by Garfunkel.

The Vilnius ghetto provided especially extensive cultural activity, with concerts, theater, choirs, drama, etc. The first public concert by the ghetto's symphony orchestra took place on January 18, 1942. Gens and the ghetto police provided the initiative, and proceeds from the concert were donated to help the needy. A cultural department was established in early April 1942 by the Jewish council. Late April 1942 saw the opening of the theater with the play *Shlomo Molcho*. A Hebrew/Yiddish choir was established in spring 1942. People also delivered lectures on various subjects.

At first all this cultural activity aroused the opposition of certain circles, who distributed flyers saying, "In a graveyard, you don't make a theater." But the public wanted culture.⁵² Herman Kruk, who was sharply critical of the first concert in the ghetto and generally critical of the Jewish council, wrote in his diary: "Nevertheless, life is stronger than anything. . . . The boycotted concerts prevail. The halls are full."⁵³ After a year of cultural activity in the ghetto, an event was held at which Gens pointed out the "ideology" behind this activity, "We wanted," he said, "to give man the chance to be free of the ghetto for a few hours, and we succeeded in this. Our days here are harsh and grim. Our body is here in the ghetto, but they have not broken our spirit."⁵⁴

A library and archives were operated in the Vilnius ghetto. The library contained about 45,000 books and a list of about 2,500 registered readers. Thousands of documents were stored in the ghetto's archives, including German directives, orders issued by the Jewish council and Jewish police, and testimonies from survivors of Panerai and provincial townships. In September 1942 Gens appointed a team of writers to record the history of the ghetto.⁵⁵

Various factors contributed to the extensive educational and cultural activity in Vilnius, which was absent in most of the other ghettos. The main factor was the eighteen-month period of relative quiet enjoyed by the Vilnius ghetto from late 1941 to mid-1943. An additional factor was Jewish Vilnius's cultural tradition as "Jerusalem of Lithuania" and the ghetto's Jewish council and its leader, Gens, who saw the importance of cultural activity. This combination is what made the Vilnius ghetto unique in the cultural and educational activity that took place in it.

In the Kaunas ghetto, too, there was extensive cultural activity; there, too, the Jews enjoyed a prolonged period of relative quiet. An orchestra consisting of dozens of musicians and singers gave weekly concerts to large audiences. The first concert took place in August 1942. As in Vilnius and for the same reasons, there was opposition among certain circles to the concerts, but the dissidents eventually reconciled themselves to the inevitable. Cultural activities in the ghetto included literature, chess, and sports.⁵⁶

The ghetto in Minsk was the only one of the large ghettos in the old territories that existed for more than two years. In the Minsk ghetto, there were no facilities for educating children and young people, and there was no cultural activity. There was no hiatus in the massacres in the Minsk ghetto, and no period of relative quiet during which the inhabitants might have turned to such activity. Moreover, there was no Jewish education or culture in Minsk; the Soviet regime had destroyed these during the 1920s and 1930s, and there was no one in the ghetto to reinstate them.⁵⁷

In order to carry out educational and cultural activity, it was necessary for a period of relative quiet; most of the ghettos did not enjoy such a respite from the murder actions. Unlike housing and food, education and culture were not seen by ghetto Jews—and rightly so—as part of their struggle for survival. In the few ghettos where such activities could take place, special circumstances made them possible.

Religion and Tradition

Conditions in the ghettos, being forced to work on the Sabbath and Jewish holy days, the lack of kosher food, and the struggle against hunger, which forced people to eat anything they could lay their hands on, all made it extremely hard for the Jews to keep up Jewish traditions. Many synagogues were burned along with their holy books in the pogroms during the first weeks and months of German occupation. Most of the remaining synagogues were not included within the areas designated for the ghettos, and when they were, they were usually used for housing, especially for Jews who were brought in from neighboring townships. Rosenberg's "brown file" authorized Jews to conduct their religious rituals in the ghettos, but the decision for this was in the hands of the German local administration.⁵⁸

Three synagogues were included within the area of the Vilnius ghetto, and prayers were held in all of them. In spite of the hardships, the synagogues were filled with worshippers on Jewish high holy days. Observant Jews continued to keep their religious rituals, so far as conditions permitted. There were several rabbis in the ghetto; a few Torah students studied in a small yeshiva adjacent to one of the synagogues.⁵⁹

When, on the first Day of Atonement in the Kaunas ghetto, the German authorities warned the Jewish council that severe steps would be taken against workers who had not turned up for work and against the entire ghetto, Rabbi Shapiro permitted people to go to work. Several synagogues were active in the ghetto until late August 1942. Hans Kramer, the Gebietskommissar of Kaunas, issued an order, detailing a list of restrictions to be imposed on Jews, include an immediate ban on all prayers and religious services. The ghetto synagogues were closed down.⁶⁰ In Grodno, the Jewish council included a religious department, under whose auspices were some small synagogues. Of life in Lvov, Rabbi David Kahane wrote, "Religious life has not been resumed. In this respect, the situation in Lvov was worse than in outlying towns. Public prayers were banned, and Jews would congregate in private homes to conduct a clandestine *minyan*. When such a minyan was discovered, all the participants and the apartment owner were taken to the prison, and no one has yet returned from there."⁶¹

In Minsk, where Judaism had been repressed under the Soviet regime, there were no synagogues and no religious activity; the small number of observant people (mostly old) and the harsh situation were factors. According to Hersh Smolar, "Observant Jews tried to organize a minyan, during the early days of the ghetto. But they relinquished even this because of the danger of sudden attacks."⁶²

It was customary in the ghettos for Jews to recite the Kadish prayer for the murder victims. Religious life was usually resumed in the ghettos during the holy days. In some ghettos matzos were baked for the Passover. Booths were erected for the Feast of Tabernacles, and on the last day, Simhat Torah, special services were held in the synagogues.⁶³ Avigdor Shachan wrote on religious practice among the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina, who were banished to Transnistria:

The Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina, who were steeped in religion, continued to lead a religious way of life even during the various stages of deportation. . . . When the trucks came to a brief halt, groups of Jews would form a minyan to pray and beg for the persecution to cease. When the deportees arrived at their final destination, they formed minyans and prayed, hoping for imminent salvation.⁶⁴

Jewish sources relating to the Holocaust in the occupied Soviet territories—diaries, testimonies, and memoirs—make very little reference to matters of religion. Nonetheless, it may be assumed that the tragic events of the Holocaust did not generally change the individual's attitude toward religion. An observant Jew would have done everything in his power to follow religious ritual, so far as conditions in the ghetto allowed him to. There were no outstanding

cases, among the religious Jews in the ghetto, of rejecting their belief in God. On the other hand, among the secular public in the ghettos, there was no return to religion as a result of the Holocaust tragedy. As far as the Jewish councils were concerned, religious activity was extremely minor, and most of them did not have religious departments. Religious ritual in the ghetto remained an issue of personal choice.

Courts of Law in the Ghettos

With the seclusion of Jews under ghetto conditions, there arose a need in most of the large ghettos for a court system; this was provided by the Jewish council. The ghetto courts dealt with both civil and criminal matters. Before the establishment of courts, these matters were handled by the Jewish councils and the Jewish police. The abnormal conditions in the ghettos, and the overcrowded housing where several families were forced to share one room often resulted in conflicts. Barter of clothing and household objects in return for smuggled food, theft, neglecting to carry out Jewish council orders regarding sanitation, and taxes—all required the establishment of a court system, with residing judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. Most of the people who filled these tasks were lawyers by profession.⁶⁵ A unique document describing the activity of these courts of law was delivered by the judges from the Siauliai (Shavli) ghetto and relates to the court's activity between October 20, 1941, and January 10, 1943:

During the time included in this report, the court dealt with 185 civil matters and 151 criminal matters. . . . The ghetto court usually administered two kinds of punishment—financial fines and imprisonment in the ghetto prison. . . . The prison is in the cellars. . . . We must point out the great respect and faith shown to the court by the ghetto inhabitants.⁶⁶

Courts of law in the ghettos were also authorized to pass death sentences, although instances of this were few. One, possibly the only one, took place in the Vilnius ghetto, when the court passed a death sentence on five criminals for the murder of Josef Greenstein, who was involved in black market dealings with them; they took his money and buried him in a cellar. The ghetto police investigated the murder and arrested the five, who confessed to murdering Greenstein and another man. On June 4, 1942, the five were hanged after the Jewish council approved the sentence. The court also sentenced Jacob Avidan, a criminal who had come to Vilnius from the Lida ghetto, where he had informed the German authorities about the presence in the ghetto of refugees from the Vilnius ghetto. Sixty refugees were executed as a result of his betrayal, together with six mem-

bers of the local Jewish council and the Jewish police chief. Avidan arrived in the Vilnius ghetto, where he was arrested, tried, and hanged along with Greenstein's murderers. The sentences were carried out with unusual speed from fear of the Germans wanting to see the criminals, who, in order to save their hides, would have provided information about illegal activity in the ghetto. After this trial, there were no more murders in the Vilnius ghetto.⁶⁷ Sources on the Minsk ghetto contain no allusion to the existence of a court of law, and any issues that needed settling legally were dealt with by the Jewish council and the Jewish police.

Financial Sources of the Jewish Councils

In order to finance their diverse activities in the ghettos and to pay the salaries of their staff, including the Jewish police, the Jewish councils needed financial sources. Included in the Jewish councils' expenses were the repair and maintenance of buildings; subsidizing and distributing food to the needy; funding hospitals; hygiene and sanitation; children's and old people's homes. The Jewish councils were also required to pay the municipality for the water and electricity it supplied to the ghettos. And the Jewish councils needed funds for bribing Germans in local administration for such purposes as to prevent a murder action and to reduce the number of people sent to labor camps (which usually meant to their death). Jews were often arrested for various "misdemeanors" such as not wearing a yellow mark on their clothing, smuggling food, and being outside the ghetto. Sometimes the Jewish councils were able, by way of a bribe, to secure the release of these people and thus save their lives. This happened in all the ghettos.

All the funds for the Jewish councils came from Jews in the ghettos. They received nothing from all the property and money confiscated from the Jews by the German administration. The Jewish councils had the following financial sources:

Food rations allocated by the Germans were bought by the Jewish council and sold at a profit.

Employers outside the ghetto paid the Gebietskommissars for Jewish labor. These transferred 50 percent of the payment to the Jewish council, who paid the workers after removing its own commission.

Ghetto Jews paid the Jewish councils rent on their apartments, as well as taxes for water and electricity, medical care, and sometimes for burying their dead.

The Jewish councils collected taxes from the owners of workshops, bakeries, grocery shops, and restaurants in the ghettos.

Taxes were levied on people who had managed to bring money and valuables to the ghetto and on food smugglers who had become wealthy.

Taxes were levied on income from workshops inside the ghetto.

There was a graduated poll tax on all the ghetto inhabitants, which excluded welfare cases and the elderly.

Fines collected by the Jewish ghetto police from people who did not go to work or did not keep their surroundings clean, etc.

All the Jewish councils included financial departments, and some had two separate budgets. The first was the official budget, detailing income and outlays and available for scrutiny even by the German administration. The second was the secret and unofficial budget, containing funds meant mainly for gifts and bribes to the German administration. Funds for the second budget came from taxes levied on smugglers and black market traffickers and from money and valuables confiscated from these people. In the absence of organized auditing and suitable supervision, it is reasonable to assume that this budget was also put to personal use by some of the Jewish council members who had access to it.

THE IDEOLOGY OF WORK FOR LIFE

The German administration kept Jewish skilled and unskilled workers and their families alive temporarily in the ghettos in order to exploit their labor. The Jewish councils' labor offices were responsible for supplying the Germans' demands for laborers. These demands were usually passed to the Jewish council from the German labor offices, which operated as part of the *Gebietskommissariat*. Some of the demands came directly from the Sipo or the army.

Often the ghetto labor offices had to resort to punishment and to enlist the help of the Jewish police in order to force people to go to work in places where the labor was physically hard or the employers were brutal. Nepotism and corruption were not rare when it came to sending people to fill various jobs. Connections, family ties, and money could buy a better place in which to work. Avraham Tory, the former secretary of the Kaunas ghetto's Jewish council, wrote:

The ghetto inhabitants are full of complaints at the labor office. . . . People queue for hours on end in the labor office, demanding to have their jobs changed. . . . All the demands are just, but people refuse to understand that it is not in the power of the office to provide easier jobs. . . . Certain department heads began seeing themselves as having unlimited power, with the result that without *protektzia* [nepotism] you can't get suitable employment.⁶⁸

Organization of work was based on places of work. A group of people working in a certain place formed a work unit. In every workplace there was a Jew who was in charge of a group of workers, and he was known as the “brigadier.” The brigadiers liaised with their employers and attained positions of power. In some ghettos, the brigadiers tried to place themselves above the Jewish councils.⁶⁹

While the murder actions were in process in the ghettos, a concept developed that could be defined as the “ideology of work for life.” This ideology focused on the idea that the hope and the chances for ghetto Jews to stay alive depended on their ability to work and their ability to prove to the Germans the economic viability of maintaining the ghetto and its inhabitants. According to this ideology, it was important to expand the number of ghetto inhabitants in full-time employment, to increase production, and to be as economically efficient as possible. The objective of this concept was to buy time, to put off for as long as possible the liquidation of the ghetto, and it was based on the hope that prevailed in the ghetto that Germany would eventually be beaten and that this could happen so suddenly as to leave the Germans without the time or the possibility of liquidating the ghetto and its inhabitants. Such hopes intensified after Germany’s defeat in Stalingrad. The “ideology of work for life” was shared equally by the Jewish councils and the ghetto Jews. It had rooted itself in all the ghettos, especially those that had enjoyed extended periods of relative peace between murder actions. The ideology required a comprehensive mustering of the ghettos’ workforce to prove to the Germans that the majority of the population was in employment.

In the absence of communications between the ghettos, this ideology did not pass from one ghetto to another. In each ghetto it evolved out of an evaluation of the situation by the Jewish council and the Jewish public. The fact that in most cases the Germans made a point of sparing numbers of what they considered essential workers from the massacres reinforced the hopes of the Jews and the concept that their survival was connected to their ability to continue working.

Practical expressions of this ideology were supplied by the Jewish councils in the ghettos of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, Pinsk, Lvov, Mogilev-Podolsky, and others, and was accepted and supported by the Jewish ghetto population.⁷⁰ The Jewish councils did their best to increase the numbers of Jews employed outside the ghetto and to open workshops inside the ghetto whose produce was marketed to the German army and other German institutions. This was made possible by the introduction to the workforce of larger numbers of women, youths, and old people and a reduction in the number of people working in services inside the ghettos. On the initiative of the Jewish council, and at times on the initiative of the workers themselves, workshops were established inside the ghettos for the production of clothing, shoes, welding, leatherwork, and other small industries.

Statistics in our possession show that certain ghettos experienced a constant increase in the number of workers. In the Vilnius ghetto, the number of employed people in late 1941 was around 4,000; by July 1943 the number had grown to 14,000, out of a total ghetto population of above 20,000.⁷¹ In March 1943 the number of people in employment in the Kaunas ghetto was 7,200, and by summer it had grown to 10,500. The ghetto population during those months numbered nearly 16,000.⁷² The desire to prove that the German economy and the local German administration benefited by sparing the lives of Jews was common to all the Jewish councils.⁷³

But the work for life ideology did not succeed in saving the ghetto Jews, and most of them were murdered. It did, however prolong their existence, and they were liquidated just before the liberation of the areas in which they lived. Although no extensive research has been done on the subject, it can be determined that the number of survivors of those ghettos that were liquidated at a later date is greater than that of ghettos that were liquidated earlier. This is due to the duration of the war and Germany's deteriorating military condition, which led to its need for more Jewish manpower. Thus when the ghettos—including those in Kaunas and Siauliai—and the Jews in camps in Latvia and Minsk were being liquidated, those Jews who were still fit for work were sent to labor or concentration camps, and some of them survived.⁷⁴ The Jewish councils' work for life ideology was the only one that provided the Jews with the hope of survival. This is also the reason that the ghetto population supported it and was partner to its execution.

The Jewish councils and the Jewish public in most of the ghettos shared a single goal—to continue maintaining the ghetto in the hope of reaching the day of liberation. The Jewish councils led the ghetto Jews in a reality that had never before been experienced by a Jewish leadership. In spite of being established in accordance with decrees issued by the German administration, whose orders they had to follow, the Jewish councils were also a continuation of the Jewish leadership of the *kehilot*, as they existed in the past. The members and heads of the Jewish councils did not choose to be included in this body, and generally they did not even want to be included. They were appointed to their positions by the German administration, or they were elected as representatives, sometimes as a result of pressure that was placed on them by ghetto residents.

The Jewish councils were the focus of daily Jewish life in the ghettos, and under inhuman conditions they made it possible for the ghetto Jews to live and subsist. They were not willing collaborators with the German administration. They were a necessity for the Jews, and even if the German administration had not established the councils as a channel for carrying out their orders, the Jews themselves would have done so, in order to have an authority to conduct their

lives inside the ghetto and to represent them to the German authorities. This quite positive view of the Jewish councils does not relate to groups of collaborators that the Germans appointed in the Jewish camp in Lvov or Minsk or elsewhere, and which were known as the “operation group,” after the Jewish councils had been liquidated. These groups consisted of criminal elements. They were not known as Jewish councils and must not be seen as such.

An appointment to the post of chairman or member of the Jewish council did not guarantee that its holders would live longer, and many of them were murdered for refusing to carry out German orders, in the course of actions and in the periods between actions, even before the ghetto was finally liquidized. Three out of four Jewish council heads in Lvov were murdered by the Germans. Two chairmen were murdered in the Minsk ghetto. In Vilnius two chairmen were murdered along with members of the Jewish council. In Lida, the first Jewish council was murdered in its entirety. In the townships of Monastyrshchina and Khislavichi south of Smolensk, all the members of the Jewish council were murdered because the local Jews allegedly showed “an impudent and provocative attitude” toward the Germans.⁷⁵

For many reasons, the attitude of the ghetto Jews toward the Jewish councils was neither singular nor uniform in all the ghettos. The Jewish council served as a channel for transferring information on the various sanctions imposed by the German authorities and were required to implement these sanctions, including sending people to forced labor. It was the council that often had to deny the requests of many of the ghetto inhabitants for food. The council imposed taxes on them. And, harshest of all, perhaps, the Jewish council did not have the power to provide all the Jews with Scheinen, which often determined who was to live and who was to die. Some of the Jewish councils were tainted to some extent by nepotism and were guilty of helping those closest to them. Nonetheless, the majority of the ghetto inhabitants recognized the council’s authority, they valued its activities, and knew that it was meant to ease their lives. Even the fighting underground groups that evolved in the ghettos did not decry the Jewish councils or question their authority.⁷⁶

THE JEWISH POLICE

The Jewish police was subordinate to the Jewish council, which recruited its people and appointed its commanders. Its job was to assist the Jewish council in carrying out orders issued by the German administration and in maintaining order inside the ghetto. Recruitment was conducted by way of street notices calling on young men to volunteer. Police commanders were usu-

ally former army officers. In the Kaunas, Vilnius, and Grodno ghettos, the police numbered around 200 men. The Jewish police in Lvov had a force of 500 until the great action of 1942 and the reduction of the ghetto, when the number dropped to around 300. In Pinsk the number of Jewish police was about 50; in Mogilev in Belorussia the number was 15.⁷⁷ The large ghettos were divided into police precincts, with a station in each one. Apart from this, there was a police force responsible for the ghetto gates, and there was a ghetto prison.

The first recruits to the ghetto police were the Jewish intelligentsia, who, having no skills other than intellectual ones, sought a way to obtain a Schein and avoid being sent to do hard physical labor. Service in the police also provided their families with a certain security against deportation and murder actions, and their food rations were larger than those of the other ghetto inhabitants.

The Jewish police were required to take part in searching houses and rounding up Jews for “dispatch out of the ghetto,” which was often a euphemism for a murder action. The Jewish police were required to bring the requisite number of people for deportation; otherwise, they and their families would be taken. They were often obliged to accompany the Germans and local police from house to house, helping them seek out Jews in hiding. Often the Jewish police did not carry out these missions and were themselves killed. There were many, too, who resigned from the police force. They were replaced by men who would do anything to save their own lives. The Jewish police in Lvov and their activities were typical. According to Yones:

During the early stages, the recruits included youngsters from among the intelligentsia. . . . But in time, there were changes in the human composition of the Jewish police. . . . When the Germans turned the Jewish police into a tool for rounding up Jews, people with a conscience resigned and were replaced by mercenary thugs, who were prepared to carry out the Germans’ orders.⁷⁸

The activity of the Jewish police in Lvov and the changes in personnel that took place in its ranks were exceptional to some degree. In most of the ghettos, the Jewish police did not participate directly in house searches. In many cases the Jewish police paid with their lives for refusing to hand over their co-religionists to be murdered. In late March 1944 forty Jewish policemen, including their commander, Moshe Levin, and other officers were tortured by the Sipo, then shot at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas for refusing to provide information on the location of malinas and on the activity of Jewish resistance movements in the ghetto. Only a few of the 140 policemen who were taken to the Ninth Fort broke down under torture and agreed to cooperate with the Germans.⁷⁹ Following the murder of the policemen, the Jewish police force in the Kaunas ghetto was dispersed. In

its stead the Sipo established the “Order service” (*Ordnungsdienst*), which was staffed by people willing to obey the Germans.⁸⁰

The Vilnius ghetto police removed 406 old and chronically sick people from the Oshmiana ghetto on October 23, 1942, and handed them over to the Germans and the Lithuanian police, who shot them. Gens justified this, saying that he could have refused to comply, but then the Germans and the Lithuanians would have taken 1,500 children and their mothers instead of the old and chronically sick.⁸¹ Many policemen in the Vilnius ghetto were active in the anti-German underground, and deputy police commander Yosef Glasman was among the underground’s leaders.⁸² Jewish council chairman A. Mushkin and police chief Z. Serebryansky cooperated with the Minsk ghetto underground in transferring equipment to the partisans in the forests. The two were accused of collaborating with the partisans and executed by the Germans.⁸³

The Jewish police was a body unknown in the past of Jewish communities. It formed a part of the conditions and the reality of the ghetto, which the Germans forced on the Jews. The tasks it was forced to carry out placed it in constant conflict with the ghetto inhabitants. So long as they acted under the auspices of the Jewish council and were responsible for maintaining law and order in the ghetto, the police was accepted by the ghetto inhabitants. In some ghettos this situation changed gradually, when the role played by the Jewish police in rounding up Jews for deportation turned the population against them. Service in the Jewish police did not contribute to their survival. When the ghettos and the labor camps were liquidated along with all their inhabitants, the Germans murdered the Jewish policemen, too.

The Jewish ghetto police were a necessity dictated by reality. Even if the German administration had not demanded the establishment of such a force, the Jewish councils would have found themselves in need of one. The essential tasks carried out in the ghettos, such as arranging housing, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, and distributing food could not have been achieved without the help of a police force. Work details, without which the ghetto could not have continued to exist, preventing theft and murder; these, too, required the presence of a police force. A discussion of the history the Jewish ghetto police should not focus on its necessity but on the behavior and activities of the Jewish police in the various ghettos.

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The Jewish Armed Underground in the Ghettos

GENERAL CONDITIONS

In many of the ghettos throughout the occupied territories, Jews formed armed underground groups in order to fight the Germans. The idea of rising up and fighting became galvanized within a reality of total extermination of Jews and at a time in which the ghetto inhabitants had become aware of this tragic reality. The source of strength of this underground was the awareness that Nazi Germany had sentenced the Jewish nation to total annihilation, and that under such circumstances, it was better to die fighting than to die on the edge of a murder pit. Also, there was still a spark of hope that a ghetto uprising would open the way to an escape to the forests to take up guerrilla warfare.

The complete isolation of the Jews in the ghettos and the lack of communication between one ghetto and another determined the character of the Jewish underground movements. It was not a central hierarchic movement but underground organizations that acted independently of each other and under conditions that were unique to each of them. Thus, in order to describe the organizations and their activity, it is necessary to focus on the various ghettos in which fighting undergrounds were formed. Many factors influenced the appearance of these organizations, the main ones being the timetable of the murder actions, the ability to obtain weapons, and the existence of forests and partisans in the region.

THE UNDERGROUND IN THE LARGE GHETTOS

Minsk

In October 1941, a few months into the German occupation, individual groups of Jewish communists in Minsk formed an underground organization with the aim of transferring groups from the ghetto to the forests in order to participate in partisan warfare. Hersh Smolar, formerly a leading member

of the illegal communist party in Poland, was elected to lead the underground, together with Nahum Feldman, who had fought in the ranks of the Red Army during the October revolution.¹

The underground leaders did not consider their organization to be independent Jewish activity but part of overall communist activity in the German rear area. Unlike underground leaders in other ghettos, the Minsk underground did not consider the idea of remaining in the ghetto and organizing an uprising there. Their idea was to escape to the forests and embark on guerrilla warfare. The fact that Minsk was surrounded by large forests, where Red Army soldiers had started partisan activity, made the escape to the forests to join them a possibility.

At the height of its activity, the Minsk ghetto underground numbered around 450 members. Underground members who worked at the Krasny Urochishche warehouses, where Soviet trophy arms were stored, removed rifles and other weapons and smuggled them into the ghetto. Weapons hidden by Red Army soldiers before falling into German captivity were uncovered by the Jewish underground and brought to the ghetto. The underground also operated a radio that received news from Radio Moscow, which it relayed throughout the ghetto.²

In late November 1941 the ghetto underground made contact with a non-Jewish communist underground group in Minsk, headed by the engineer and reserve army officer Isai Kosinets, who had concealed his Jewishness and was passing as a Tatar. As a result of these connections, the print shop at the disposal of the ghetto underground was passed over to the urban underground, and propaganda leaflets were printed and distributed. The urban underground was also in contact with members of the Jewish council, including its chairman, Mushkin, and its ghetto police commander, Serebriensky, from whom they received support.³

At the same time, another underground group—consisting of Red Army officers—was active in Minsk. The group, which was known as the “military council,” was in contact with the urban underground, but maintained its independence and focused mainly on getting people out to the forests. The Germans uncovered the “military council” in late February or early March 1942 and later the urban underground as well. Hundreds of underground members were arrested and shot, including Kosinets, who was hanged on May 7, 1942. During the interrogation of the urban underground, the Germans uncovered details on the ghetto underground and its connections with Mushkin and Serebriensky. The two were arrested and executed; many others were also arrested. Smolar and his colleagues were obliged to hide inside the ghetto.⁴ The Einsatzgruppen report dated April 3, 1942, described the uncovering of the Minsk underground and noted that “an illegal group of 60 ghetto Jews . . . bought weapons and constantly

augmented the ranks of the partisans.”⁵ According to an Einsatzgruppen report dated May 8, 1942:

In August/September 1941 a Jew tried to organize and unite these units. He was the oil engineer Isai Kosinets, who assumed the name Mustafa Delikurdogly. . . . Kosinets was the chairman of the [communist] committee and worked in matters concerning the ghetto. . . . So far, a total of 404 people have been arrested, including the partisans who had been organized in the ghetto. Of these, 212 have already been shot. A large quantity of weapons and ammunition was seized.⁶

Following the March 2, 1942, action, before the downfall of the city underground, the ghetto underground sent three groups of their members to the forests south of Minsk in order to establish partisan bases.⁷

The fall of the town's communist underground supplied the Sipo with accurate information on the ghetto underground. Many of its members were arrested and shot together with all the inhabitants of the houses in which they lived. Under those circumstances, Smolar and other underground members decided to transfer their activity to the forests. The grand action of late July 1942 speeded up the decision to leave the ghetto.⁸ Throughout its existence, between 4,000 and 5,000 people escaped the Minsk ghetto for the forests and joined partisan units or family camps.

Vilnius

The initiators of the Vilnius ghetto underground were members of the Zionist youth movements and youth members of the Bund Party and Jewish communists, who remained in the city after the German occupation. Up to the end of 1941, the main underground activity of these groups consisted of seeking ways to rescue their members from murder actions. These groups concluded that the response to the mass murder of Jews should be armed resistance. The mass murders in Vilnius and elsewhere in Lithuania led some of the Zionist youth movement leaders to believe that the actions were aimed at the Jews of Lithuania (as most of its perpetrators were Lithuanians), rather than an overall German policy of total annihilation of the Jews everywhere. This belief was based on information that reached them in the late summer of 1941, from Belorussia and the General Government, according to which no mass murder of Jews was being carried out in those regions. In late September 1941 an emissary of the Zionist youth movements in Warsaw arrived in Vilnius, bringing with him information on the situation there. This information caused a dispute within the underground groups between those who thought it would be better to move to these regions,

where conditions would be easier for armed underground activity, or those who argued that the mass murder of Jews would not be limited to Lithuania and would spread eventually to other territories under German occupation. Therefore, they said, there was no reason to leave Vilnius, and they should remain to organize and to fight.⁹

In October and December 1941 emissaries of the Zionist youth movements left Vilnius for the Grodno, Bialystok, and Warsaw ghettos with news of the mass murders in Lithuania. The emissaries from Warsaw and Vilnius formed the underground connection between the ghettos, thus becoming “ghetto messengers.” Most of the ghetto messengers were young women with an Aryan appearance, which made it easier for them to carry out dangerous missions. The news brought by the ghetto messengers of the relative quiet (at that time) in the ghettos of Bialystok and Warsaw only sharpened the dissent between those who sided with relocation of underground activity from Vilnius and those who preferred to stay in Vilnius. The activity of the ghetto messengers on the Vilnius-Warsaw axis continued on and off until mid-1942; some were caught and executed.¹⁰

On the night of January 1, 1942, a meeting was held in the Vilnius ghetto of representatives of underground groups affiliated with the Zionist youth movements, in which a call was made for Jewish youth to get organized for armed resistance, with the slogan “They Shall Not Take Us Like Sheep to Slaughter.” Three weeks later, on January 21, a meeting was held in the ghetto with the participation of representatives of the Zionist youth movements and some Jewish communists. It was decided to establish a fighting organization in the ghetto with the aim of preparing an armed resistance in the event of a German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. The name given to the organization was “FPO” (Fareinikte Partizaner Organizatsie, United Partisan Organization). Among the decisions at that meeting was that “resistance is a national act, the nation’s struggle for its honor.” It was further decided that the organization would instill the idea of defense in the other ghettos. Yitzhak Wittenberg, a communist experienced in underground activity that went back to the Polish regime, was elected to command the organization. The leading staff included Abba Kovner from Hashomer Hatza’ir and Yosef Glasman from the Betar movement, who was deputy of the Jewish ghetto police. An underground group of Hehalutz Hatsa’ir-Dror, headed by Mordechai Tennenbaum-Tamarof, which preferred to transfer the underground activity to areas where mass murders of Jews had not yet occurred, had left Vilnius in mid-January 1942 and moved to Bialystok. Several months after its establishment, FPO was joined by members of the Bund.¹¹

FPO included people from the entire Jewish political spectrum — from Betar on the right, to the communists on the left. At its height, the organization consisted

of two battalions, totaling 300 people. Members of Hehalutz Hatsa'ir-Dror who had not left for Bialystok and had remained in Vilnius established an underground group of their own in the spring of 1942, under the leadership of Yehiel Scheinbaum. The objective of this group, which was known as "Yehiel's struggle group," was to leave for the forests once it made contact with the partisans. At its height, the group had between 150 and 200 members.¹²

The first weapons obtained came from war booty warehouses in the Borbishki suburb, which employed Jews, including some members of the FPO. Dozens of guns were removed from these warehouses and brought to the ghetto. FPO members who worked outside the ghetto bought weapons from non-Jews and smuggled them into the ghetto. Yehiel's struggle group used similar means to obtain weapons. Jewish policemen, who were also members of the underground, helped in bringing the weapons through the ghetto gates. These were then hidden in malinas.¹³ In the spring of 1943 Yehiel's group joined the FPO as an autonomous unit, and Scheinbaum joined the FPO staff.¹⁴

FPO made contact with "Armia Krajowa," the Polish underground in Vilnius, and conducted negotiations concerning help in obtaining weapons. Following several weeks of talks, weapons were denied and ties with the Poles were severed.¹⁵ Apart from this, FPO was in contact with a group of Polish communists that had formed in Vilnius in early 1942 and that called itself the Organization for Active Struggle (*Zwiazek Walki Czynnej*).¹⁶

In late February 1943 a Lithuanian communist underground group became active in Vilnius, under the leadership of Juzas Vitas-Valunas, who had been mayor of the city during the Soviet regime. The group was known as the Union for the Liberation of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Islaisvinimo Sojunga* Union). Through Wittenberg, ties were formed between this organization and the FPO. A coordination team called the Vilnius Anti-Fascist Committee, which included representatives of FPO, the Polish Organization for Active Struggle, and the Lithuanian Union for the Liberation of Lithuania, was established. FPO was the largest and best organized of these three groups. It gave the Vilnius Anti-Fascist Committee a printing machine on which anti-German leaflets in Polish and Lithuanian were printed and distributed throughout the city.¹⁷

The relationship between FPO and the Jewish council under its chairman Jacob Gens can be described as peaceful coexistence. FPO did not oppose the Jewish council, which acted to ensure the existence of the ghetto as an economic entity that was worthwhile for the Germans to maintain, so long as this was possible; and Gens, who knew of the existence of FPO and its leaders, did not oppose the ghetto underground as long as it did not jeopardize the existence of the ghetto. In May 1943, with the increased partisan activity in the forests, German security

arrested Jews who were trying to buy weapons from local inhabitants who then betrayed them. Jewish partisans, former inhabitants of the Svencionys ghetto, came to the Vilnius ghetto in early April and June 1943, contacted the FPO, and smuggled people out of the ghetto and into the forests. In June they brought letters from commanders of the Soviet partisan Markov brigade, including a proposal to send armed people to the forests. The Sipo got wind of this activity and informed Gens that these acts were endangering the very existence of the ghetto. Gens urged the FPO leadership to put an end to the activity.¹⁸

The first open conflict between FPO and the Jewish council took place at an event known as the “Wittenberg Affair.” In late June 1943, the Sipo got on the tail of the city underground committee of the Communist Party and arrested its members. They were interrogated and tortured, and one of them informed the Germans about his connections with Wittenberg. The Sipo ordered the Jewish council to hand over Wittenberg and threatened to liquidate the ghetto if they failed to do so. On the evening of July 15, 1943, Gens arrested Wittenberg and handed him over to the Lithuanian police who had come to collect him. On the way to the ghetto gates, the police and their prisoner were attacked by members of FPO, who released Wittenberg. Gens alerted many of the ghetto inhabitants that the very existence of the ghetto was in danger. An angry crowd of ghetto inhabitants surrounded the buildings in which Wittenberg and his rescuers were shored up and demanded Wittenberg’s extradition. The lives of 20,000 ghetto inhabitants must not be endangered because of one man, they shouted. The FPO faced the dilemma of fighting their fellow Jews or handing over Wittenberg. The leaders decided that Wittenberg would have to hand himself in. Wittenberg, who accepted this decision, was taken by the Sipo. The following day, he was found dead in his cell; he had swallowed a cyanide pill.¹⁹ Under the circumstances, there was nothing FPO could have done otherwise.

Abba Kovner was given command of FPO. The leadership decided that the organization would continue its preparations for an uprising in the ghetto, while sending a group led by Glasman to the forests, where they would establish a partisan base to absorb the remaining fighters after the ghetto uprising. Glasman set off for the forests in the Naroch region on July 24, 1943, with twenty-one FPO members.²⁰

A few days after their departure, Gessia Gleser (aka Albina) arrived in Vilnius. Gleser was a Jewish parachutist who belonged to the leading Operation Group of the Soviet Lithuanian partisans, under the command of Motiejus Shumauskas. She had been sent to help the communist underground, which had collapsed following the arrest and execution of Vitas. Gleser entered the ghetto in August 1943 and informed the FPO of the position of the partisan command, according

to which they were to leave for the forests and to fight there. But FPO adhered to its ideology that they would leave for the forests only after a ghetto uprising.²¹

On September 1, 1943, the ghetto was surrounded by German forces and the Jewish council was ordered to provide 5,000 Jews for a deportation to Estonia. FPO, which saw this action as the liquidation of the ghetto, rallied all its members and prepared for battle. An FPO leaflet was distributed throughout the ghetto which warned that people were not being sent to Estonia to work but were to be murdered in Panerai; the inhabitants were called to join the fighters and resist the Germans. Gens, on the other hand, insisted that the people were being sent to Estonia, and this was indeed true. Since the Jewish council had trouble gathering such a large number of people, German and Estonian police entered the ghetto and started a house-to-house search. In the early evening, a FPO squad commanded by Yehiel Scheinbaum opened fire on them. In the exchange of fire, Scheinbaum was killed. As darkness fell, the German forces left the ghetto.

In order to avoid further armed confrontations that would have jeopardized the existence of the ghetto, Gens reached an agreement with the Germans that their forces would not enter the ghetto and that he would provide the number of people necessary for the consignment to Estonia. He also informed the FPO about his agreement. Since the ghetto inhabitants had not responded to the call for resistance, the FPO decided to wait until the end of the action and then to transfer its members to the forests. Thus the idea of a ghetto uprising was renounced.

Between September 8 and 13, 1943, about 150 FPO members left the ghetto in groups on their way to the Naroch forests in Belorussia, 80 kilometers northeast of Vilnius. As the last group, under the command of Abba Kovner, was preparing to leave, an order arrived from Henrik Zimmanas (Yurgis), the commander of the Soviet Lithuanian partisans in southern Lithuania, according to which they were to head for the Rudniki forests, 50 kilometers to the south of Vilnius. Zimmanas, a Jew and former Communist Party leader in Lithuania, had been sent to Lithuania from the Soviet rear. The last FPO group left the ghetto via the sewers on the last day of the ghetto's existence, September 23, 1943.²² Between 600 and 700 people, almost all of them youths, left the Vilnius ghetto for the forests.

Kaunas

In the Kaunas ghetto, the idea of armed resistance came into being at a later stage. The Jewish communists under the leadership of Haim Yelin had established the Anti-Fascist Struggle Committee. In spring 1942 the Zionist groups established an underground framework under the name Williampola Kaunas Zionist Center. The Zionist groups focused mainly on educational activity. Its members were influential in Jewish council circles. In spring 1943 the Zionist

underground changed its goal from education to armed resistance.²³ This change was influenced by news of the partisan activity in the forests, the shock at the murder of the last of the Jews in the small ghettos in eastern Lithuania in April 1943, and news of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

An agreement was reached in June 1943 between the communists in the ghetto and the Zionists on the establishment of the Jewish Fighting Organization (JFO), which would obtain weapons and organize groups to leave the ghetto and join the partisans in the forests. Haim Yelin stood at the head of this organization, which at its height numbered some 400 members. JFO maintained contact with the Jewish council in the ghetto, and Dr. Elkes, its chairman, who favored underground activity, helped by providing money for the purchase of weapons and by including its members in the ghetto police and in jobs that slowed contact with people outside the ghetto. Once contact was made with the partisans, the Jewish council supplied the groups leaving for the forests with clothing and transport.²⁴

Contact with the partisans in the forests was made via “Albina,” who was in Vilnius at that time and sent an emissary to summon Yelin. He arrived in Vilnius in mid-September 1943 and accompanied Albina to the Rudniki forests to meet the partisans. Two weeks later Yelin returned to the ghetto. In October he received a message from Zimmanas, ordering the ghetto underground to send some of its members to the Augustova forests, about 165 kilometers southwest of Kaunas, near the border with eastern Prussia.²⁵ Zimmanas wanted to establish a partisan base there to broaden activity in southern Lithuania. Yelin tried to persuade Albina, who was then in Kaunas, that the organization was not yet prepared to leave for Augustova because of the distance and the absence of guides and because of the dearth of weapons at their disposal and the low military training of his group’s members. Albina promised him that in the Augustova forests they would meet partisans and be supplied with weapons. She said, “Orders are not a subject for debate. They are carried out!”²⁶

The first group of eighteen left the ghetto on October 21. They were armed with a few guns. They got lost along the way and split into smaller groups. Some were arrested by the German police; the others returned to the ghetto. It was decided to send another group. Twenty-five people left on October 28, and another group left two or three days later. These groups were unarmed, and some of them lost their way and were arrested. Only a few reached the Augustova forests, and after a few days of fruitless searching for partisan groups, they decided to return to the ghetto. The various groups that left the ghetto for the Augustova totaled seventy-one people. Those caught by the police were taken to the Ninth Fort, where they were put to work burning corpses; some were killed along the way, and the rest were returned to the ghetto.²⁷

With almost no weapons or guides, over a route that went through villages with hostile populations, and having no partisan experience, the JFO's Augustova operation was doomed. Moreover, at that time there were no partisan bases in the Augustova forests for the Kaunas ghetto fighters to join.

In spite of the failure, the JFO did not drop the idea of partisan warfare, and in late November 1943 it received permission from Zimmanas to send its people to the Rudniki forests. The Rudniki forests were located about 150 kilometers from Kaunas. By mid-April 1944, JFO had transferred about 160 of its people to the forests. On April 6 the Sipo in Kaunas arrested and executed Haim Yelin. That month also saw the failure of another group to leave the ghetto, and most of its members were killed along the way. The route to the forests was blocked. In Kaunas, 150 members of JFO remained to suffer the fate of the other Jews in the ghetto.²⁸

Riga

The armed underground began its activity in early 1942 in the small ghetto in Riga, where some 4,000 men were kept alive after the action of late November and early December 1941. The underground wanted to organize armed resistance in the event of the ghetto being liquidated and to get their members to the forests as soon as contact was made with partisans. At its peak the Riga ghetto underground had 150 members, including 28 of the ghetto's 40 Jewish police; among them was their commander.²⁹ Underground members who worked in the Pulver Turm war booty arsenals managed to smuggle dozens of weapons into the ghetto and hide them in bunkers.³⁰

In the summer of 1942, news arrived in the ghetto of partisan activity in eastern Latvia, near Daugavpils (Dvinsk), and especially to the east in the forests near Pskov in Russia. The news reinforced the ghetto fighters' desire to escape to the forests. The organization managed to contact a group of former Soviet POWs hiding in Riga, including Boris Pismanov, a Soviet army officer and a Jew who was passing as a Ukrainian. With the help of Pismanov and his comrades, a group of ten armed underground members left the ghetto in a hired truck on October 28, 1942. Some distance from the forest, they planned to meet a contact who was to lead them to the partisans. Altogether four groups intended to leave in this way. Shortly after their departure from the city, the first group was intercepted by a German ambush and, in an exchange of fire, seven of the Jews were killed, two were wounded and taken prisoner, and one managed to escape and return to the ghetto. The Germans had known beforehand from one of their agents of the ties between the ghetto underground and Pismanov and about the preparations for escape to the forests, including the route to be taken by the truck.

Surviving German documents describe the way in which the group was followed and then ambushed.³¹ Pismanov and members of the underground had already been arrested on October 28 as a result of the information in the hands of the Germans. According to the German report, dated November 2:

Of the Jews who escaped from the ghetto on October 28, 1942, seven were shot as they were being arrested. . . . The two Jews still alive were taken to prison. In this regard, a further nine were arrested on the same day, including the leader. . . . They are Pismanov, known as Borka, a Soviet POW [there follows a list of the POWs and civilians who were arrested]. Pismanov was the leader and organizer of the escaping Jews. . . . At the end of their journey, the escaping Jews were to provide the responsible Latvian who was with them in the truck with assurance that their journey had come to a successful end and then Pismarov was to prepare the second group.³²

No further groups left for the forests. In retaliation for the attempted escape, the Sipo commander in Latvia, Obersturmbannführer Dr. Lange, ordered the execution of dozens of Jews. On October 31, 1942, 108 people were put to death, including 42 Jewish policemen accused of not preventing the escape and even assisting it.³³

*Ghettos in Western Belorussia: Grodno,
Baranovichi, Novogrudok, Lida, and Slonim*

As a result of the relative quiet in the Grodno ghetto before November 1942, armed underground activity began only after the November and December 1942 action, during which thousands of Jews were deported to Auschwitz and Kelbasin. In late 1942 an underground Zionist group sent five of its members to examine the possibility of escape to the forests. According to Zipora Birman:

We sent the first group to the forests. . . . It was difficult to obtain weapons in the ghetto. We were sure they would obtain weapons on their way. . . . They went but did not arrive. One returned, and four fell. Terrible things he [the man who returned] described, about what he saw on the way. Hundreds of Jews lying dead in the forests of Martsikonys, dozens . . . begging to die. It is better to die than to live this kind of life. Our hopes for the forest have been dashed for the moment. Without weapons, it is impossible.³⁴

Attempts failed at organizing a mass escape during the late January 1943 action. The Jews did not respond to the underground's calls, and deportation went ahead undisturbed. Having given up on the idea of a ghetto uprising, the underground decided to leave Grodno, and in late January 1943 a group left for Bialystok

ghetto, where they joined the local underground. Others left in small groups for the forests in the hope of joining the partisans. Most of the Grodno Jewish underground members were killed in the Bialystok ghetto uprising on August 1943; others were killed in the forests.³⁵

An underground group with 120 members was organized in Baranovichi following the murder action in early March 1942. The commander of the ghetto's Jewish police, Warshawski, and fifteen of the twenty-two ghetto police were members of this underground, whose objective was to escape to the forests. It succeeded in obtaining dozens of weapons from the German arsenals and bringing them into the ghetto. On September 22, 1942, the ghetto was surrounded by German forces and an action took place. After the action, about 450 people from the Baranovichi ghetto and the labor camps escaped to the forests.³⁶

In the spring and summer of 1942, underground activity began in Novogrudok, under the leadership of Dr. Kagan. The underground's objective was to prepare for an armed uprising, followed by escape to the forests. At the same time, another underground group was active in the ghetto, which planned to join the partisans in the Naliboki forests. In the spring of 1943, several members of this group left for the forests; most of them fell in the partisan attack on the township of Naliboki. The uprising and escape to the forests, planned for April 15, 1943, did not take place because of the opposition of most of the ghetto's inhabitants to armed resistance. On September 26, 1943, Dr. Kagan led 233 Jews through a 250-meter escape tunnel dug by the underground. Although most of the escapees were killed, about 100 made it to the forests, where they joined the partisans.³⁷

In Lida, underground activity and escape to the forests began after the May 8, 1942, action in the ghetto. Among the leaders was Baruch Levin. The Jewish council chairman, Halperstein, summoned Levin and told him:

If there remains in us any kind of dream, it is the dream that few among us will remain alive. I myself do not hope to be among those few. Hopefully someone will remain, in order to describe, when the day comes, what happened here. . . . And then a man comes and uproots even this feeble chance. . . . Big countries bend down before the Germans, and here is a man who has already lost his family, and only one thing remains for him, "a rusty shotgun." And one of these days, he'll rise up and emit one bullet from his shotgun and put an end once and for all to the one and only remaining chance.³⁸

Halperstein expressed the feelings of many of the ghetto inhabitants with regard to underground activity, since the possibility to escape to the forests was not a viable option because of their age, their family commitments, and the absence of weapons. Their only hope for survival, weak though it was, lay in their ability

to work and their loyalty to the German administration. Baruch Levin and others continued their underground activity and escaped to the forests. Some 500 people left Lida and made it to the forests.³⁹

Following the grand action that took place in Slonim in mid-November 1941, an anti-fascist committee was convened, consisting of representatives of various political streams. Jews from Slonim worked in arsenals containing booty collected by the Germans; members of the ghetto underground removed dozens of weapons from the arsenals. The underground made contact with a group of partisans who operated in the Rafalovka and Volche-Nora forests, south of Slonim. These partisans were headed by Pavel Proniagin, a Soviet army lieutenant, who had remained behind in the German rear area. The ghetto underground supplied these partisans with arms and medicines.

The first group of ghetto underground members left for the forests in June 1942 and joined Proniagin. They were helped by the Jewish council, who supplied them with clothing. There was no armed resistance to the action that took place in early July 1942, in which 10,000 Jews were murdered, because the underground was unprepared. Following the action, when less than 2,000 Jews remained in the ghetto, about 400 escaped to the forests.⁴⁰ According to Gert Erren, the Gebietskommissar for Slonim, in his September 26, 1942, report on the underground, "The Jews played a large role in all the destruction and sabotage. . . . They were active in supplying stolen weapons and in stealing medicines from hospitals [on behalf of the partisans]. A broad-scale operation conducted by Oberleutnant Schroder, it transpired that of the 223 dead bandits, 80 were armed Jews."⁴¹

Volhynia and Polesie

In Pinsk, the largest of the ghettos in Polesie, underground activity was limited, and there is little information available on it. With the increase in partisan activity in the Polesie region in 1942, some groups consisting of several dozen underground members escaped to the forests to join the partisans. The Jewish Council opposed the escape to the forests, fearing that this would jeopardize the existence of the ghetto. The ghetto underground planned to set the ghetto on fire on the eve of the ghetto's liquidation and cause such a commotion as to allow for a mass escape of the inhabitants.

According to an order issued by Himmler on October 27, 1942, the Pinsk ghetto was seen as a central base for partisan activity in the swamp region of Prypiat, and it was to be liquidated.⁴² Rumors spread in the ghetto on October 22 that trenches were being dug close to the airport for use in the forthcoming action. The German administration received information on these rumors, and

Mirski, the Jewish council chairman, was called to the Gebietskommissar, where he was promised on “German honor” that the trenches were being dug to provide storage for petrol containers and that no harm was to come to the town’s Jews. The underground decided to postpone the plan to set the ghetto on fire until the situation cleared.

The ghetto was liquidated between October 29 and November 1, before the underground had had a chance to carry out its plan. On the eve of the action and during it, several dozen people managed to escape to the forests.⁴³

In the ghettos of Volhynia, including the larger ones in Rovno and Lutsk, underground activity was limited. It can be accredited to the fact that during the summer of 1942, when the mass murders were carried out, the prevailing conditions in Volhynia did not encourage underground activity: there were few forests in Volhynia, apart from those in the northern parts bordering on Polesie; in the existing forested regions, large segments of the Ukrainian population was anti-Semitic, who either killed Jews escaping from the ghettos or handed them over to the police; the forests were rife with Ukrainian nationalistic units, who murdered many Jews who fell into their hands.⁴⁴ In late 1942, Soviet partisans began deploying in the forests of north Volynia, but by this time most of the Jewish ghettos had been liquidated along with their inhabitants.

Lvov and East Galicia

In the Lvov ghetto, one of the largest in the occupied Soviet territories, there was very limited underground activity. Following the major action in mid-August 1942, in which some 50,000 Jews were deported to Belzec, several people organized some groups in order to arm themselves and escape to the forests. The only large forests that afforded shelter and conditions for partisan activity were those in the Brody region, 80 to 100 kilometers northeast of Lvov. Crossing so large a distance on foot and passing undetected through hostile populations was virtually impossible. In late 1942 or early 1943, a group of twenty armed Jews left the ghetto for the Brody forests. The two drivers hired by the group to take them to their destination betrayed them to the police, and they were ambushed. All the escaping Jews were killed in the ensuing exchange of fire. Most attempts on the part of other groups to escape to the forests failed, and only a few small groups managed to get away and join the partisans.⁴⁵

During the liquidation of the Lvov ghetto in June 1943, there were some instances of armed resistance. In one part of the ghetto a group of Jews opened fire on the German and Ukrainian police forces who were searching the ghetto. The houses in which the Jews were holed up were set alight and blown up. Thus, according to Gruppenführer-SS Katzmann in his June 30, 1943, report:

As the number of Jews decreased, their resistance became greater. They used weapons of all types for their defense, and in particular those of Italian origin. The Jews bought them from Italian soldiers stationed in the district. . . . Owing to increasingly grave reports on the growing arming of the Jews, the sharpest possible measures were taken for the elimination of Jewish banditry, in the last two weeks of June 1943. . . . In Lvov . . . in order to avoid losses to German forces, several houses were blown up or destroyed by fire.⁴⁶

The Polish underground *Armia Krajowa* was active in Lvov, but no organized help was extended to the Jews, and the only cases of these people helping the Jews were based on personal acquaintance.⁴⁷ No fighting underground movements were established in the other large ghettos of eastern Galicia, Ternopol, and Stanislaw, but there were cases where groups of Jews escaping to the forests. As the Ternopol ghetto was being liquidated, Jews opened fire on the German forces from one of the ghetto's cellars; the Germans threw grenades into the cellar. No details are known on this incident or on the identity of the Jews involved.⁴⁸

There were several reasons for the absence of a substantial underground movement in the Lvov ghetto and in other ghettos of eastern Galicia — unlike Minsk, Vilnius, Kaunas, and others in west Belorussia. There was a dearth of large forests in the region to provide suitable cover for partisan activity, the anti-Semitic UPA were active in the existing forests, and there were no Soviet partisans in the region to provide some aim and direction for underground activity in the ghettos.

SMALL GHETTOS AND ARMED RESISTANCE

The idea for armed resistance in these ghettos, as in the large ghettos already described, came in the wake of massacres. Many of these ghettos were located close to forested regions. They were small, and the houses in them were made of wood. Revolt in these ghettos did suit one kind of resistance. Houses could be burned, and the ensuing havoc would enable a mass escape to the forests. In many of the smaller ghettos, this was the chosen form of resistance.

In the Nesvizh ghetto, east of Baranovichi, an underground group was organized in the wake of an action on October 30, 1941, in which most of the township's Jews were exterminated. About 600 Jews remained in the ghetto. As in most of the smaller ghettos, this underground group was based not on previous political affiliation but on personal acquaintance and the willingness to fight. The underground planned to set the ghetto on fire and force their way out, along with the other ghetto Jews, to the forests. On July 20, 1942, news came of the arrival in the township of a Lithuanian police company; it was clear that this heralded the end of the ghetto. At dawn the following day, the Jewish underground took up

defense positions, and the ghetto population prepared to escape; some of them went into hiding in malinas. The German and Lithuanian police opened fire on the ghetto. The underground returned fire, and there began a mass escape through the ghetto gate and the fences. Thus according to one of the escapees:

Suddenly someone shouted: "Jews, follow me, we'll break through the gate!" . . . At that moment, grenades blew up from the other side of the ghetto. . . . The dead and wounded from the first row to break through the gate fell. . . . The ghetto's weapon was fire. The houses, dry wooden houses, were sprayed with petrol. . . . The murderers were confused by the spreading fire. The entire ghetto was going up in flames. . . . In the Polish street, we see the Christians carrying their household goods from their homes to the fields, because the tongues of fire were already licking at their houses.⁴⁹

As soon as the flames broke out, there was no longer anyone to lead the escape, and it was everyone for himself. People forcing their way out of the gate and through the fences were killed on the spot, and many others who were hiding in the malinas were burned alive or suffocated from smoke inhalation. Others, who managed to escape the burning ghetto, were killed on their way to the forests by police or by local inhabitants. Only a few dozen Jews made it to the forests, which were close to Nesvizh. On July 21, 1942, the day on which the Nesvizh ghetto was liquidated, the Germans also liquidated the ghetto in the nearby township of Kleck. There, too, the Jews set the ghetto on fire, burst through the fences, and tried to escape. There, too, most of the Jews were killed, and only a few made it to the forests and joined the partisans.⁵⁰

Underground activity in the township of Dyatlovo (Zhetl), southwest of Novogrudok in western Belorussia, began in late 1941. Jewish council chairman Altar Dworzecki initiated the organization. The underground consisted of sixty members, including ghetto police, and planned to prepare the uprising that was to take place with the liquidation of the ghetto; arms were purchased with Jewish council funds. After being betrayed by a local inhabitant with whom the underground had been in contact, Dworzecki and a group of underground members were forced to escape to the forests in mid-April 1942. The Germans ordered the Jewish council to hand over Dworzecki, and they surrounded the ghetto on April 30, 1942; 1,200 Jews were taken away and shot.⁵¹ The mass murder of Jews in western Belorussia was under way at that period, and this action was a part of it, but it is possible that the discovery of the underground and Dworzecki's escape accelerated its execution.

In the Lipichany forests, Dworzecki made contact with one of the non-Jewish partisan groups. On May 11, 1942, they shot Dworzecki and some of his people.

Reasons are unclear, but it could be that they were anti-Semitic and wanted the Jews' weapons. Some of the Jews returned to the ghetto. Although Dworzecki's murder by people who were supposed to be Soviet partisans severely demoralized the ghetto underground, they did not cease their activity. Between August 6 and 8, while the Dyatlovo ghetto was being liquidated, 600 people managed to break out and escape to the forests.⁵²

Underground activity in the Svencionys ghetto northeast of Vilnius began in February 1942. The ghetto housed about 500 Jews who had survived the October 1941 action in which 2,500 Jews were murdered. The underground consisted of youngsters between the ages of 16 and 19. The group, whose objective was to leave for the forests and join the partisans. Some group members worked in the arsenal at the edge of the township and managed to appropriate about ten guns. On April 13 two of the youngsters were cleaning their weapons, and a bullet was fired inadvertently from one of the charged guns, injuring one of them. As a result, the Lithuanian police arrested both of them. Fearing that their comrades would be unable to withstand the Sipo interrogation, the rest of the group decided to make a getaway that same night. Hundreds of the ghetto inhabitants surrounded the youngsters, begging them to stay: if the Germans failed to find them, they would liquidate the ghetto and everyone in it. The group faced a tragic dilemma: by staying, they faced certain death, but their escape would jeopardize the entire ghetto population. They decided to remain. On April 16, 1942, the imprisoned youngsters were executed. They had withstood torture and not provided the names of their comrades.⁵³ The group, consisting of 22 young men and women, left the ghetto during the second half of March 1943 and made for the forests of Adutishki in Belorussia.⁵⁴

In Mir, southeast of Novogrudok, the underground was established after the action on November 9, 1941. Only 850 Jews remained in the ghetto. The local German police employed a man called Josef Oswald in the capacity of German-language translator. According to his papers, the man was an ethnic German, but in fact he was Shmuel Rufeisen, a Jewish refugee from Poland and a member of a Zionist youth movement. His knowledge of German allowed him to pass as an ethnic German. The ghetto underground made contact with him, and he helped them obtain weapons. In early August 1942 Rufeisen supplied the underground with information of an action planned for the next few days; moreover, on the night of August 10, police forces would leave on a hunt for partisans and would spend the night away from the township. He suggested taking advantage of this for carrying out a mass escape of the ghetto population. There were many reservations. Was the information reliable? If it was, how could they leave with women, children and old people in tow? In the end, only 180 of the ghetto's 850

people escaped on the night of August 10. Most of the people believed that death awaited them both inside and outside the ghetto, so it was better to stay behind with their families and share their common fate. On August 13 the Germans exterminated the Jews of Mir.⁵⁵

In Glubokoie, in west Belorussia, underground activity began during the second half of 1942, with young people leaving the ghetto and making for the forests. The ghetto underground was in contact with the partisans in the forests and decided on a mutual plan of action. In August 1943 the partisans were to attack the German forces in the township simultaneously with an uprising in the ghetto, which at that time housed around 2,000 Jews. However, the ghetto was liquidated before the plan could be put in action. The Jewish council learned of the plan to liquidate the ghetto a couple of days in advance, when the Sipo informed them that all the Jews were to be removed to camps in the General Government. The Jewish council passed on this information to the underground and the ghetto population. When the German and local police forces entered the ghetto at dawn on August 20, they faced the fire of the ghetto underground. Thus, according to Paul Rachmann, the Gebietskommissar of Glubokoie, in a report to the Generalkommissar of Belorussia, dated August 30, 1943:

On Friday, August 20, 1943, at 5:00 in the morning, there came the sound of heavy gunfire. . . . An immediate and personal investigation of the location revealed to me that the intention was to evacuate the ghetto in Glubokoie and to transfer the Jews to concentration camps in the General Government. . . . Further to the exchange of shots, there was also a spontaneous outbreak of fire in some of the houses in the ghetto and the flames spread swiftly through the houses that were built of wood and thatched roofs. The strong wind on August 20 increased the general conflagration. . . . Attempts by the fire brigade did not prevent the spread of the fire. . . . It is only fortunate that on August 17, the day of the uprising of the Druzhina unit [Verbandes] in Dokshytse, the ghetto did not become a source of grave danger to Glubokoie, where the security forces were very few.⁵⁶

In the ghetto the battle continued for several hours. About 200 people from Glubokoie, some wounded, made it to the forests of Naroch and Koziany.⁵⁷

In the western Polesie township of Lakhva, an underground was established. News that Jews were being exterminated in the neighboring ghettos reached Lakhva in August 1942. On September 2, news came that pits were being dug in the vicinity of the township. The following day, when more German forces arrived in the township, their intentions became clear—liquidation of the ghetto. The underground issued an order to set fire to the houses, and shots were fired

toward the forces surrounding the ghetto; some of them were hit. About 1,000 Jews broke out of the ghetto. Most of them were caught and murdered, with the help of the local non-Jewish population, and only about 120 Jews reached the forests.⁵⁸

In the Volhynian township of Tuchin, the uprising was headed by Jewish council chairman Getzel Schwartzman. Underground activity began there in September 1942, and Jewish council funds were used to purchase weapons. Petrol was prepared for burning the ghetto houses, into which some 3,000 Jews had been crowded. On September 23, the Jewish council received news of the arrival of an SS unit and learned that pits were being dug in the vicinity. The Jewish council alerted the 60 members of the underground, who were divided into fighting and arson squads. The Germans apparently noticed the preparations for resistance, and on September 24 they opened fire on the ghetto. The underground returned fire and began burning houses and several synagogues outside the ghetto that had been used for storing grain. People broke out of the ghetto. About 2,000 Jews, two-thirds of the ghetto population, managed to escape to the Pustomyty forests, northeast of the township. The shooting and the arson continued for two whole days, during which several local and German policemen were killed, as well as most of the Jewish underground. Schwartzman did not escape, but presented himself to the German commander and insisted that he was personally responsible for what had happened. He was shot in the Jewish cemetery.⁵⁹

Ilya Ehrenburg described the organized resistance of the Jews, who opened fire on the Germans as they were liquidating the ghettos in Ostrog (west Ukraine), Proskurov (now Khmel'nitski), and Yarmolinchi (south of Proskurov). German and local policemen were killed in these uprisings.⁶⁰ No further evidence or sources with regard to these acts of resistance were found.

Similar acts of resistance and escape took place in dozens of smaller ghettos, consisting of arson, mass breakouts through the ghetto fences and gates, and escape to the forests. These cases included cooperation with the Jewish council and the Jewish ghetto police forces in preparations and in the uprising.

JEWIS IN NON-JEWISH UNDERGROUND MOVEMENTS

Hundreds of Jews were members of the communist underground groups that operated in the various towns and cities in the occupied territories. Some of these had been established even before the retreat of the Red Army and stayed behind to carry out subversive activity. Leaving Jews behind in the German rear area in order to carry out underground activity was a mistake on the part of the Soviets, who did not know or did not understand that, even before they had

a chance to fulfill their missions, these Jews were to be arrested and murdered along with their coreligionists. The anti-Semitism rife in these areas meant that these Jews could not count on the support of the local populations, support without which no underground can operate. Some leaders and underground activists who excelled in their work and whose names were famous throughout the Soviet Union included Jews, although their nationality was concealed and they were often “stuck” with other nationalities. German sources frequently referred to Jews as being among captured underground activists.

Isai Kozinets, the Jew who organized and headed the communist underground in Minsk, was mentioned in Soviet sources as secretary of the underground city committee, but no mention is made of the fact of his being Jewish.⁶¹ A small underground group was active in Minsk, separate from Kozinets’s organization, which helped POW officers to escape from their imprisonment. A German patrol stopped some of the escapees, who, under interrogation, revealed the identity of the people who had helped them escape, and two men and a young woman were arrested; they were hanged in a public execution in the city center on October 26, 1941. The Germans placed a sign on the young woman with the legend in German and Russian, “We are partisans who shot German soldiers,” and photographed the execution. After the liberation of Minsk, the Soviets found the photographs and published them worldwide, with special emphasis on the young woman, whose behavior in front of her executors was heroic. The executed partisans were identified as Volodya Schcherbachevich and Kiril Trus. The girl, who was classified as “unidentified” (*Neizvestnaia*), was Maria Borisova Bruskina, a 17-year-old Jewess whose mother, Lucia Bruskina, had been murdered in the Minsk ghetto. Photographs of the three were displayed in many Soviet museums, but the Jewish girl continued to be “unidentified.”⁶²

The secretary of the underground communist committee in Kiev was Semion Bruz. In June 1942 the Germans uncovered the town’s underground and arrested most of its members. In order to avoid falling into German hands, Bruz shot himself.

Tanya Marcus was Jewish and one of the heroines of the Kiev underground. In the documents prepared for her by the underground, she was given a Georgian name, Markusidze, and she adopted the guise of the daughter of a Georgian prince killed by the Bolsheviks. As such, and as someone who hated the Soviet regime, Tanya offered her services to the Germans. Tanya was a beautiful 20-year-old, and German officers sought her favors. The information she gleaned from these officers enabled the underground to kill some of them. When the Germans discovered who she was, she escaped from Kiev, but was caught on her way to the partisans in the Chernigov region in August 1942; she was interrogated and shot.

According to the Sipo report dated October 16, 1942, among those central members of the terrorist groups in Kiev was the Georgian Tatyana Markusidze, who was born in Tbilisi on September 21, 1921. A report by the district committee of the Communist Party in Kiev, dated August 15, 1946, described the city's underground activity during the occupation, also mentioned the "brave comsol girl who knew no fear, Tanya Marcus, who was known as Markusidze—an active member in the sabotage movement—personally exterminated dozens of soldiers, officers, collaborators. . . . She carried out operations of the highest responsibility on behalf of the organization in preparing sabotage operations, etc."⁶³ In this report and in other documents describing her heroism, no mention is made that Tania Marcus was Jewish.

Soviet sources also mention Boris Sondak, a Jewish underground member in Dnepropetrovsk, who participated in blowing up the bridge over the river Dnepr. Sondak and his comrades were arrested in October 1942 and executed.⁶⁴

According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated November 11, 1941, an underground group was uncovered in Mogilev in Belorussia. Of the fifty-five members who were arrested, twenty-two were Jews. The report also stated that these people had been liquidated and "collective measures were carried out against the Jews" in Mogilev.⁶⁵

One of the last active groups in Odessa, under the leadership of V. Molodotsov, fought against Romanian soldiers and officers, carried out sabotage operations, and relayed information to Moscow. This group, which was twenty-five strong, was betrayed by one of its members. On September 10, 1942, the paper *Odesskaia Gazeta* published an article about a Romanian military tribunal against the twenty-five members of this underground group, who had been captured. The list of accused included eight blatantly Jewish names. It is reasonable to assume that of the remaining seventeen, some were Jews, even though their names did not show this. Twelve of the accused, including the eight Jews, were executed on October 24, 1942; the remainder were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.⁶⁶ According to the Einsatzgruppen report dated September 15, 1942, "fifteen members of an illegal Communist organization under the leadership of a Jew were arrested in Berdichev [Ukraine]. . . . They intended to set the grain harvest on fire and to derail trains."⁶⁷

Extensive research on the role of Jews and their activity in the non-Jewish underground in the occupied Soviet territories, which has yet to be conducted, will certainly reveal many names of Jews who held key positions in these groups.

UNDERGROUND AND ESCAPE FROM
THE SITES OF AKTION 1005

The prisoners employed in Aktion 1005 knew full well that they were destined to die and that the Germans had no intention of allowing them to live once their job was completed. Their underground activity, therefore, had a single objective—escape. Similar activities took place in many Aktion 1005 sites, but the better known, the ones that ended in partial success, were those in Babi Yar in Kiev, in Panerai near Vilnius, and at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas.⁶⁸

About 100 Jews, mostly prisoners of war, and a further 200 non-Jews, mostly captured underground members and partisans, were employed in burning corpses and erasing signs of the massacres in Babi Yar. Work was carried out during daylight hours, and at night the workers were enclosed in an underground structure, their legs chained. Zachar Trubakov, a Jew who managed to escape from Babi Yar, testified:

Throughout our time in Babi Yar, there was not a moment we did not think of escape. . . . The underground group consisted of Volodya Kuklia, Ya'akov Kapper, Leonia Duliner [and another 13 names, mostly of Jews] and myself. . . . [The escape] took place on the night of September 29, 1943. It was symbolic: two years ago on September 29, the fascist occupiers murdered [in Babi Yar] tens of thousands of people.⁶⁹

The escape took place after midnight. At the designated time, the door opened and people broke out shouting, "Hurrah." The Germans opened lethal fire on the escapees, most of whom were killed on the spot; others were caught in the chase and in the searches in Kiev and its surrounds. Only 15 of the escapees, mostly Jews, were alive when Kiev was liberated.⁷⁰

In the Ninth Fort in Kaunas, 64 prisoners, including 4 non-Jews, were employed in burning corpses and erasing evidence of murder. The prisoners were held in underground cells with barred doors and windows. The escape from the fort in late November 1943 was initiated by members of the ghetto underground together with a few of the Jewish POWs. In planning their escape, they came across a dark cell with a steel door. An examination of the cell revealed a tunnel leading to the fort's courtyard, and from there another tunnel led to a slope in the field, which contained no guard posts. The escape date was set for Christmas night, when the guards would be celebrating and some of them would be drunk. The escape went according to plan, and all 64 prisoners managed to escape from the fort. As dawn broke on December 26, the Germans discovered the escape and began a manhunt. Of the 25 escapees who aimed to reach the ghetto, 19 managed to enter and go into hiding, but 6 were captured near the

ghetto and shot. Footprints in the snow helped the Germans capture some of the escapees. Some who had made it to the ghetto were helped by the underground to get out and join the partisans in the Rudniki forests.⁷¹ Thus, according to the report prepared by the Sipo in Lithuania and dated January 13, 1944, regarding the situation during December 1943: "On the night of December 25, 1943, there was an escape from the fort of prisoners from enterprise 1005b. The escape was not felt at first, and when it was, there began an immediate manhunt for the escapees. So far, we have managed to catch 37 of the escapees, 5 of whom were shot trying to escape."⁷²

In Panerai near Vilnius, 80 Jews were employed in burning corpses; 10 of them were POWs. The prisoners, whose legs were chained, were held in an underground bunker situated in a pit 6 to 8 meters deep. Descent to the bunker involved climbing down a ladder, which was raised after the prisoners were all inside after a day's work. After the escape of the prisoners from the Ninth Fort, the bunker was fenced in with barbed wire and mines were installed all around it. In late 1943, a group of people gathered to plan an escape. An idea was to dig a tunnel 30 to 35 meters long, leading from the bunker, under the barbed wire fence. In January 1944 the group began digging. Work was conducted at night, by hand, and with the help of eating spoons. The dugout earth was hidden beneath the pallets on which they slept and between the double boards that separated the cells. The tunnel was ready toward mid-April, following three months of work. The breakout took place on the night of April 16, 1944. The shackles were removed from the prisoners' legs with the help of a metal file found while exhuming the murdered bodies. About 40 people managed to get away through the tunnel before the guards noticed them and opened fire; the remaining prisoners stayed in the bunker. About 25 of the escapees were shot or captured, but 15 managed to escape and 11 of them made it to the Rudniki forests and joined the partisans.⁷³

The conditions under which the underground groups acted in the Aktion 1005 sites were harsher than those in the ghettos and, indeed, most of the escapees were killed as they tried to get away, but the few who did make it were saved, since there is no doubt that they would have been murdered when their work was completed. Members of the Jewish underground in the Aktion 1005 sites proved that resourcefulness and initiative and the desire to fight made it possible for some of them to survive.

The first Jewish underground groups in occupied Europe to take up arms against the Germans were those in the occupied Soviet territories. Their activity took the form of ghetto uprisings and/or partisan warfare in the forests.

In those areas in which the mass murder of Jews took place during the first months of German occupation, the Jews had no time to organize for armed resis-

tance. This was the fate of most of the Jews of the Baltic states and the old Soviet territories. It was only in those places where Jews remained in ghettos, following the waves of annihilation, that underground resistance groups appeared.

An essential condition to the existence of an armed underground was the ability to obtain weapons, which were necessary for resistance activity within the ghetto and for conducting partisan warfare. Sources for obtaining weapons were limited, the main ones being the arsenals in which the Germans stored their spoils of war. Another source was the local population, who had hidden away arms left behind by the Polish army in September 1939 and during the retreat of the Red Army in June and July 1941. These arms were expensive to buy, and it was difficult to locate the people who had them in their possession and to ensure that they would not betray the fact of their sale to the German authorities. The Jewish underground groups in the ghettos received no weapons from the non-Jewish undergrounds operating in the region.

The demographic composition of the remaining Jews in the German-occupied Soviet territories influenced the ability for armed resistance. In the annexed territories, as well as in the Minsk area, which were taken during the first weeks of war, there was no organized evacuation nor wide-scale military mobilization, and most Jews, including youngsters, who provided the human resources for armed resistance groups, remained in the occupied territories. The more eastern territories (the old territories) were occupied at a later stage, after there had been an organized evacuation of institutions and factories, and most of the men had been mobilized into the army. Most of the remaining Jews in these areas were women, children, and old people; a human basis for forming a fighting underground movement was lacking.

In those ghettos in which the underground planned uprisings, the timing was determined by that of the liquidation of the ghetto, when an uprising was the only alternative to the murder pits, and the ghetto inhabitants understood that this was their only chance of survival. In the hope of receiving help in obtaining weapons and escaping to the forests, the Jewish underground groups sought ties with anti-German underground movements outside the ghettos. The results of their searches were fruitless, and the Jewish underground received no help whatsoever from their non-Jewish counterparts.

The conditions under which the Jewish underground groups operated were extremely harsh and unequaled by any other anti-German underground movements. They had to work within a closed ghetto surrounded by the enemy; they operated under the constant threat of murder actions; they had only a few arms. In spite of this, the Jewish undergrounds succeeded in organizing uprisings, enabling the escape of thousands of people from the ghettos to the forests, where they joined the partisans in their battle against the German enemy.

37

The Jews in Forests and the Partisan Movement

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT

Partisan warfare against the German occupier was conducted in the Soviet territories on a scale that was unequalled in other parts of occupied Europe. The many thousands of square kilometers of forests, wide areas of swampland, and an undeveloped road system created the ideal conditions for partisan warfare.

Limited partisan activity began early in the war with small isolated groups of Red Army soldiers, who remained behind in the German rear area after their units were defeated by the German army. Some had evaded German captivity, and others had escaped captivity and embarked on partisan activity in those places where topographical conditions and the support of the local population permitted it. Among those early partisan groups were communist activists who were not evacuated and remained in the German rear areas.

Parallel to this initiative by people from below, the Communist Central Committee of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government issued a general directive on June 29, 1941, to the governing authorities of the various republics instructing them to establish “partisan units and sabotage groups . . . in the territories occupied by the enemy, in order to combat the enemy army and to ignite a partisan war in every place and site.”¹ On July 3, 1941, in his first speech after the outbreak of war, Stalin called on the citizens of the occupied territories “to blow up bridges and roads, to sabotage telephone and telegraph lines, to burn forests, warehouses, mills, to create insufferable conditions for the enemy and anyone who collaborates with him, to pursue and exterminate them at every turn, to incapacitate all their activity.”²

The Soviet partisan movement developed gradually from limited operations by small units and up to large-scale operations involving thousands of fighters. The objective was to sabotage communication lines to and from the front, to prevent the economic exploitation of the occupied territories, and to tie German

forces to securing the rear area, thus assisting the Soviet army at the front. The partisans' objectives did not include saving the civilian population, including Jews, from Nazi terror and annihilation; the partisans witnessed the exterminations, and the Soviet authorities were aware of it. The central staff of the Soviet partisan movement was established in the Soviet rear area in May 1942. Headed by Panteleimon Ponomarenko, it gradually took command of the separate partisan units hitherto active in the German rear area. Each of the Soviet republics under German occupation had a republican HQ of partisan movements, subordinated to the central staff, which supervised and coordinated partisan activity in that republic. The partisan movement was subordinated to the Communist Central Committee and not to the Soviet army. The Soviet army and the NKVD had their own intelligence units in the forests in the German rear. The central staff established wireless contact with the partisan units and began using aircraft for parachuting reinforcements and command cadres, weapons, and dynamite to them.

JEWS IN THE FORESTS

The forests in the occupied Soviet territories served as fighting bases for the thousands of Jews who operated as part of the Soviet partisan movement. Jews were among the first partisan groups in the forests and/or were sent from the Soviet rear to organize partisan activity in the occupied territories. With the onset of the second stage of mass murder in the spring of 1942, larger numbers of Jews began making their way to the forests. They were mostly young members of ghetto underground groups who wished to join the partisan groups and fight against the murderers of their nation. But the forests also provided a way to survive. The escapees included women, children, and some old people who organized themselves into family camps, which included a nucleus of armed people whose duty was to guard the camp and provide food for its inhabitants. Many of the Jews had arrived in the forests even before the Soviet partisan groups started to operate there. They had wandered in small groups, seeking refuge and food, dependent on the kindness of the non-Jewish population, among whom were anti-Semites who betrayed the Jews and handed them over to the Germans.

The local population knew the location of Jewish camps and partisan bases. This information was essential to the Germans. Information on the presence and activity of the German forces in the vicinity was equally essential to partisan survival and activity. The rural population in the areas of partisan warfare suffered severely from German reprisals against anyone who assisted the partisans. Nonetheless, whether out of national loyalty or in response to German terror and exploitation, there were regions in which large segments of the population

identified with the partisans and helped them. Even then, there was no change in their attitude toward the Jews. The local populations, owing to their inherent anti-Semitism, were unwilling to suffer reprisals for not informing the Germans of the presence of Jews in their vicinity. Under these circumstances, continued independent existence in the forests was almost impossible for the Jews. But, having no choice, the local population became reconciled to the presence of Jews among the ranks of the Soviet partisans or in family camps under the protection of these partisans.

In west Belorussia the attitudes of the local population toward the Jews was better than that found in west Ukraine. In Latvia and Lithuania, the locals were so hostile as to prevent Soviet partisans from establishing strongholds in the forests—the Jews all the more so.

The existence of Jewish partisans and family groups depended on three factors: they had weapons, the forests were large, and there were Soviet partisans present. The kind of large forests that could be reached on foot from areas that still had concentrations of Jews were those in west Belorussia including the Pripet marshes, around Minsk, and in northern Volhynia. And indeed, it was in these areas that most of the Jewish partisans and family camps gathered and operated between 1942 and the summer of 1944, when the region was liberated by the Soviet army.

The survival of Jews in the forests also depended on the willingness of Soviet partisans to include Jews in their groups. The activity of Soviet partisans in the regions that still had Jews was beginning to be felt in the summer of 1942. At this time, the central staff of the Soviet partisan movement had not yet taken control of most of the partisan groups in those areas, some of whose members were hostile toward the Jews in the forests. A report to Ivan Klimov, secretary of the Vileika district committee of the Communist Party, sent by V. V. Karpov, deputy commander of an intelligence unit, dated November 17, 1942, described the condition of the Jews in the forests during this period. It refers to the state of the local population and to partisan activity in the Vileika district of west Belorussia.

The Jewish population is threatened by terror. They congregate, unarmed, under shadow of the forests, begging for food. In [the place is unclear] there is a group of 300 Jews, in Krasnogo—250, in the Ianshei region—68, Zacherna—87, etc. Sometimes they are joined by escaped prisoners of war, and they carry out what they call “economic operations,” in which they take from the local population various kinds of food. The partisans do not help them, and they accept Jewish youngsters into their ranks unwillingly. There were cases of partisans from the Bogatirev unit . . . taking weapons from the Jews

who came to them and sending them back. Anti-Semitism among the partisans is quite strongly developed. . . . Jewish youngsters and men show a desire to join the partisans.³

Despite this situation and the harsh conditions, Jews continued escaping to the forests. In the forests of Narochny, Rudnik, Lipichany, Volche-Nora, and elsewhere, they established all-Jewish partisan units. Their leaders sought to emphasize their national uniqueness and the fact that they were fighting against the murderers of their people, Nazi Germany. The friendships and shared fate that had developed while they were still in the ghettos contributed to their desire to maintain their frameworks when they reached the forests. But after a few months together, the Soviet partisans disbanded these units.

Most of the Soviet partisan units included Jews, whether individuals or in groups, in relatively large numbers, in the forests of west Belorussia and north-west Ukraine. The fate and activity of Jewish partisans in the Lipichany and Volche-Nora forests were typical of those in other forests.

Jews from Slonim and the townships of Diatlovo (Zhetl), Belitsa, Kozlowshchina, Novoelnya, Molchad, and Derechin, and the labor camp at Dworetz arrived at the forests of Lipichany, which were among the westernmost regions in which the Soviet partisans operated. In these forests, several partisan units of the Lenin brigade began operating after December 1942. From among the Jews of Diatlovo, who had arrived in the Lipichany forests after the massacre of August 1942, a Jewish partisan unit was organized under the command of Hirsch Kaplinsky, one of the ghetto's underground activists. The unit consisted of about 120 people, many of them armed. During the two months of its independent existence, the unit obtained weapons and took retaliatory actions against local collaborators, who had persecuted and betrayed Jews escaping from the ghetto. In late September, the unit joined the Orliani partisan unit, under the command of Nikolai Vakhonin, and became the #3 company in this unit. Kaplinsky's men took part in attacks on German garrison forces and local police stations in the region, and their activity peaked with the attack on a German garrison in the township of Ruda-Iaworskaia in October 1942.⁴

In the Lipichany forests another Jewish partisan unit was active under the command of Dr. Yehezkel Atlas.⁵ With the liquidation of the Derechin ghetto in July 1942, he organized people for the escape to the forests; he also organized Jews escaping from Kozlowshchina and Diatlovo into a partisan unit consisting of some dozen members. This unit joined the partisan unit under the command of Boris Bulat that was part of the Lenin partisan brigade.

On August 10, 1942, Bulat's unit and others attacked the township of Derechin. Atlas and his men participated in this battle, together with dozens of Jews from

other units and unarmed Jews from family camps, who had been recruited to assist in removing the wounded and to arm themselves with weapons taken during the attack. Dozens of local police and members of the German gendarmerie were killed. The partisans also suffered losses, including Jews. About two weeks after the attack, a large German force conducted a manhunt in the forest. Bulat's people went into battle, and both sides suffered heavy losses. About 10 of Atlas's partisans fell in these battles, but the worst hit were the family camps in which over 100 Jews were murdered.⁶ Atlas and his people participated in many battles, including the attack on Kozłowszczyzna, sabotaging the bridge over the river Nieman. Atlas was highly respected among the Jews in the forest as well as by the partisan commanders.

Dozens of Jewish partisans were killed in the battles that raged during the German manhunt that began on December 10 and lasted about two weeks (Operation Hamburg), including the commanders of the two Jewish units, Atlas and Kaplinsky.⁷ In January 1943 Russian and Ukrainian commanders were appointed to command Kaplinsky's unit, and it lost its Jewish character. Many Jews distinguished themselves as fighters in the Borba (former Orliani) unit and participated in attacks on German garrisons in the townships of Nakrishi, Diatlovo, and others in the region. They also took part in battles against the Polish AK units that operated to the west of the Lipichany forests. The AK made several attacks on a family camp of Jews from Belitsa, north of the river Nieman, and killed a number of Jews.⁸ Hundreds of Jewish partisans continued to fight in the Lipichany forests, as part of the units that were active there, until the arrival of the Soviet army in July 1944.

In their reports, the Germans stressed that in Operation Hamburg, they killed 6,172 (or 6,874) of the enemies, of whom 2,988 (or 3,658) were Jews.⁹ Many others died of hunger and disease. Very few Jews survived in family camps in the Lipichany forests after this manhunt. Family camps in other forests shared a similar fate.

Among the partisan units that deployed in the forested region south of Slonim, especially in the Volche-Nora forest, there were Jews who had arrived from Slonim and the townships of Byten, Kosovo, and others, in the course of the massacre of summer 1942. The onset of Jewish partisan activity is connected to the arrival in these forests in June of several dozen members of the Slonim ghetto underground group. While still in the ghetto, these Jews had made contact with the Shchors unit, under the command of Pavel Proniagin in the Rafalovka forest.¹⁰ The sub-units of Shchors were known as companies 51, 52, 53, and 54. The Slonim ghetto underground group was admitted to company 51, but when growing numbers of Jews continued to join this company, a large number of non-Jews, together with

its commander, left and joined other units. Their reason was that they did not wish to belong to a unit that was mainly Jewish.

The commander of Shchors appointed Captain Yefim Fyodorovich to command company 51. Fyodorovich was a Jew from Gomel, an escaped POW, and company 51, which had quickly grown to 150 members, became a Jewish company. At that time Shchors had no contact with the Soviet rear area or with the central staff of the Soviet partisan movement, so it may be assumed that they were unaware of the policy against establishing Jewish partisan units. Once Fyodorovich was appointed to command it, company 51 moved to the Volche-Nora forest, which was much larger than the Rafalovka forest. A professional soldier, Fyodorovich put his people through a course of rigorous military training. The company consisted of four squads, three of whose commanders were Jewish. Out of spare parts they had found, the company managed to construct a 45 mm antitank cannon.¹¹ The first military operation in which company 51 participated was an attack on Kosovo on August 2, 1942. It was also the largest partisan attack in the region so far and involved about 500 partisans. Kosovo still had a small ghetto at that time. Ya'akov Sheptinsky, who took part in the battle, described it thus:

Our company was ordered to arrive at the town center and to conquer the police building. . . . We took up positions exactly opposite the ghetto. . . . The ghetto's inhabitants watched us from behind the barbed wire fence, in amazement and with fear. . . . We penetrate the police station. . . . The opposition ceases. . . . The battalion retreats from the town. Our 51st company now takes up the rear guard. With us, the ghetto prisoners leave. Those youngsters who had managed to obtain weapons join the battalion. The remainder will live in family camps.¹²

The liberation of the Kosovo ghetto was one of the few events in which Soviet partisans rescued Jews and enabled them to leave for the forests, while carrying out a mission that was not meant for this purpose. The uniqueness of this operation was that Jewish partisans constituted one of the main forces in liberating the ghetto Jews. Most of the Kosovo Jews to reach the forests settled in a family camp. News of the battle in Kosovo reached the Jews of Bitan, which still had a small ghetto inhabited by a few hundred Jews. In August and September 1942 most of them escaped to the forests and organized themselves into a family camp.¹³

The battle route of the 51st company was long and bloody. The company participated in an attack on the training camp used by local volunteers in the village and estate of Gvinovich, close to Bitan. After these attacks, the Germans prepared for the manhunt in Volche-Nora by concentrating their forces in the region. The Shchors command decided to evacuate the area and to move south-

east toward the Polesie swamps. The family camps remained behind to face their fate. On its way eastward, company 51 took part in an attack on a police station in the village of Chemili and the fierce battle involved in crossing the Oginski channel on September 13, 1942. Fyodorovich was badly wounded and, with no possibility of medical care, asked to be shot. He was shot and buried and replaced as commander by Leutnant Victor Guzevski. The Shchors suffered heavy loss, with many killed or wounded. A field hospital, established in the swamps under the management of Dr. Abraham Blumovich, saved the lives of many of the wounded.¹⁴

The Shchors arrived at the Polesie swamps toward the end of September. In October the 51st company took part in the attack on the township of Khotynichi. Numbers of local Belorussians had been gradually attached to the 51st company. The Jewish partisans were exposed to many expressions of anti-Semitism, especially on the part of the Shchors chief of staff, Karp Merzliakov. On October 20, Merzliakov informed the company that, due to disciplinary misdemeanors, over thirty Jewish partisans were being removed from the company. The people whose names were called out were all experienced partisans. The disciplinary misdemeanors of which some of the Jews were accused had indeed taken place, but the Shchors command took advantage of the matter in order to get rid of a large group of Jews and thus change the company's character. After weeks of wandering through the forests, the expelled, some of whom were armed, came across Vasili Vassiliev, who accepted them into his partisan unit.¹⁵

The Jews in family camps in the forests were the main victims of the Germans' hunts for partisans. The fact that the family camps included women, children and often old people restricted their mobility, and in the absence of information, they had no way of knowing in advance that the Germans were on their way. The family camps belonging to the Jews of Bitan and Kosovo, who remained in the forests of Volche-Nora after the departure of the Shchors partisans, suffered severely from the frequent Germans manhunts. The first took place on September 18, 1942. The few partisans still remaining in the area dispersed. The trials of the Bitan family camp are described by one of its members:

September 20, the eve of the Day of Atonement, the group moves to a nearby grove. . . . We come under rifle fire and break into a frenzied run. . . . There are calls to "Halt!" The children cry all the time and there is no strength left to run. . . . Enemy planes continue to follow the group. People are running like hunted animals, with no food and no water. Of the group that numbered over 300 before the manhunt, there remain only 100. Many perished. Dead bodies filled all the paths. People envy their dead comrades.¹⁶

A similar fate was shared by the Jews of Kosovo. Some tried to escape the siege and make their way to the swamps of Polesie. Many fell, and others were captured by the Germans. After the manhunt, there remained some 135 Jews alive in the forests of Volche-Nora. The returning partisans forced them to leave and to make their way to the Rafalovka forest, a distance of about 8 kilometers away. This forest was smaller than Volche-Nora, less dense, and closer to Bitan, and it was dangerous to stay there. A manhunt was conducted by the Germans in Rafalovka forest in late December 1942. This was followed on January 20, 1943, by an attack on the family camp by local armed peasants, who had received their weapons from the Germans in order to protect themselves from partisans. Only 70 of the camp's Jews survived. Another manhunt in March 1943 claimed the lives of a further 20, after which the partisans allowed the camp to return to the Volche-Nora forest. Of 800 to 1,000 Jews from Bitan, Kosovo, and other townships in the area who were in family camps in the Volche-Nora forests before the manhunts, only about 50 survived.¹⁷

During a manhunt on December 10, 1942, in the Lipichany forests, most of the partisans had left, but the Jews remained in family camps. According to the partisan Mirski:

Many of the camps fell into the hands of the murderers. The others wandered, hungry, ragged, and exhausted, through the forests, with small children in their arms. In the absence of a warm bunker, the children's hands froze and the adults' feet became paralyzed with cold. . . . People dropped in the forest, but we were unable to help them, because partisan command forbade us to visit the sick, fearing that they would pass on diseases to the partisans. On January 28, 1943, . . . I obtained a barrow full of bread, which I took to the forest for the hungry and the sick. A horrible picture unfolded before my eyes: not far from the bunkers, there had appeared a cemetery for the children and their parents, who had died of sickness and starvation.¹⁸

Jews who arrived in the forests toward the end of 1942 and throughout 1943 found already established Soviet partisan units, as well as the "wild" groups, who had joined the organized movement, under the command of the central staff in the Soviet rear. But even then, the Jews were exposed to many expressions of anti-Semitism in the forests. From the central staff came the order to disband the separate Jewish partisan units.

This disbanding was based on the principle that the Soviet partisan movement was not constructed of national groups but was founded on the Soviet republics (Belorussia, Ukraine, Lithuania, etc.), and there was no a Jewish Soviet republic. Therefore, separate Jewish units could not exist. But the way in which the Jewish

partisan units were disbanded had a blatantly anti-Semitic aspect. Although some members of the Jewish partisan units were integrated into the non-Jewish units, others were left to face their fate, mostly unarmed, in the forests; they were the victims of the German manhunts.

The Jewish partisan unit “Revenge” (in Russian: Mest) was established in early August 1943 as part of the “Voroshilov” brigade under the command of Fiodor Markov, in the Naroch forests. Zerah Ragovski (Butinas), a Jewish parachutist from Lithuania, was appointed to command the Revenge unit. At its beginning, Revenge consisted of 70 fighters; their number grew to about 250 with the arrival from Vilnius of additional underground members in September 1943, as well as other Jews who were hiding in the forests. The unit included a large number of women, and many were unarmed. Members of Revenge participated in several of the operations carried out by the Voroshilov brigade, including the attack on the township of Miadel.¹⁹

The Revenge unit existed only seven weeks. On September 23, 1943, the Revenge base was visited by Markov and Ivan Klimov, secretary of the district committee of the Communist Party. Members of Revenge were ordered to form a parade alongside the parade formed by members of the Komsomolski partisan unit. Markov and Klimov delivered speeches to the partisans, informing them that the Revenge unit was being disbanded and that people with weapons would be integrated into the Komsomolski unit, under the command of Saulevich. Some of the Revenge people, who were not to be integrated into Komsomolski, would be formed into a maintenance group (*Proizvodstvenniiaia Gruppya*) to service the partisan units. Members of the new maintenance group were left with few weapons; the fate of the remaining (majority) Revenge group was not mentioned. Clearly they were to remain in the forests to face their destiny, unarmed and with no organized framework.²⁰ According to Moshe Kalchheim, who was there at the time:

Markov (or Klimov, I don’t remember exactly) informed us that the HQ of the partisan movement had decided to disband the Jewish unit “Revenge,” because there is no place among the Soviet partisans for a separate Jewish national unit, and Jews had to be integrated in partisan units in accordance with the republics of the Soviet Union, such as Belorussians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and their like. This information shocked us. We couldn’t take in that the Jewish unit was about to be disbanded on orders from above. But the worst was yet to come, when Volodka Saulevich separated the Jewish from the non-Jewish partisans and he and his comrades unarmed the Jews and handed over their weapons to the non-Jews, who, like us, had just arrived in the forests from the nearby townships.²¹

The way in which the Partisan command chose to disband and unarm the Revenge and other Jewish units was insulting and hurtful; worst of all, however, was the outcome—by leaving most of the Revenge members unarmed in the forests, they were sentenced to starvation and turned into easy prey for every German manhunt. And this, indeed, was the fate of most of them in the late September 1943 manhunt that began in the Naroch forests and continued toward the forests of Koziany.²² A similar fate was shared by the Jewish partisan units in the forests of Rudniki, where the units were made up of members of the Vilnius and Kaunas ghetto undergrounds.²³

For the Jewish family camps, the situation was grave. In addition to the German manhunts, in which they were the main victims, the attitude of many of the Soviet partisans, who saw the Jewish family camps as freeloaders, exacerbated their sorry situation. Things changed, however, when the organized Soviet partisan movement, which had taken control of the forests in which the family camps were located, could no longer ignore the thousands of Jewish women, children, and old people, all Soviet citizens, who were fighting for survival in the forests. Parallel to it, people in the family camps found a way to become a useful element for the partisans. Led by Tuvia Bielski and Shalom Zorin, the family camps in the huge Naliboki forests, home to several thousand Jewish inhabitants, were turned into a productive force. Instead of being “freeloaders,” they set up workshops and began supplying maintenance services to the partisans. Bielski wrote about the family camps he had set up:

In the base, we established workshops, employing over 200 unarmed skilled workers, including cobblers and tailors. A sausage factory was established in the camp, as well as a soap manufacturing plant, a bakery, blacksmith's shop, clinic, and a hospital. These factories and workshops served the partisan groups in the Naliboki forests. These services were important to the partisans, who, in return, supplied food, equipment, and raw materials.²⁴

Accurate statistics are not available on the number of Jewish partisans and family camps in the forests. The conditions under which the Jews lived and fought in the forests made it impossible to keep records, and their number can only be estimated. Table 4 details the number of Jews who operated in the forests in the various districts of the occupied Soviet Union.

The Jews went into the forests on their own initiative, whether to participate in partisan warfare or to find shelter. The Soviet partisan movement took no direct action on behalf of the Jews. Nonetheless, the presence of the Soviet partisans made it possible for thousands of Jews to fight the Nazis and for thousands more to seek refuge in the forests; some of them survived. Two-thirds of the Jews in

4. JEWS IN THE FORESTS OF THE OCCUPIED SOVIET UNION

NO.	REGION/ DISTRICT	PARTISANS	FAMILY CAMPS	FORESTS
1	Minsk	3,000–4,000	*	Koidanov, Rudensk, Kopil
2	Vileika	950–1,100	900–1,300	Koziany, Naroch
3	Vilnius	600–700		Rudniki
4	Novogrudok- Baranovichi	2,500–2,700	3,500–4,200	Naliboki, Lipiczany, Volche-Nora, Nacha
5	Brest-Litovsk, Pinsk	3,200–3,750	1,500–2,500	Polesie and southwest Belorussia forests, Briansk
6	Mogilev	1,500–1,650		Some of them were from the Minsk ghetto
7	Vitebsk	700–800		
8	Gomel	600–700		
9	Volhynia	1,700–1,900	2,500	Svoritsevich, Kokhov, Chuman
10	East Galicia	300–400	2,000–3,000	Black Forest, Zhimalov, Pianitsa
11	East Ukraine, Russia	3,000–3,700	250	
TOTAL		18,050–21,400	10,650–13,500	

*Jews from Minsk ghetto were in the family camps of the forest of Naliboki in the Novogrudok-Baranovichi district.

partisan units and about half of those in family groups lived to see the end of the war and liberation.

Nowhere else in occupied Europe was there a similar situation in which thousands of Jews fought the Germans in forests in the German rear areas. The Jewish partisans, with their non-Jewish comrades, contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

38

Blood Account Casualties and Survivors

SOURCES

This chapter deals with the number of Jewish Holocaust casualties in the area within the June 22, 1941, borders of the Soviet territories under German occupation, which continued to be a part of the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. The numbers of these casualties do not include Jews from the Third Reich, Hungary, Romania, and France,¹ who had been deported to the occupied Soviet territories and murdered there.

The absence of accurate Soviet statistics on the number of evacuated Jews into the Soviet rear areas and German documentation on the number of Jews remaining in the occupied Soviet territories makes it difficult to sum up the number of Jews who perished in these territories. The Soviet administration did not conduct any kind of census of the inhabitants, including Jews, who survived the German occupation. German statistics are incomplete on the number of Jews murdered during the years of occupation. The Einsatzgruppen reports and other German documents give the numbers of Jews murdered by them in specific locations, but they don't include all of the murder sites, and there is doubt as to the accuracy of these statistics. Reports on the many massacres conducted by the Orpo and local police forces are only partial.

Soviet sources, particularly those of the Special State Commission for Determining and Investigating the War Crimes Committed by the Fascist-German Occupiers in the Temporarily Occupied Soviet Territories (*Chrezvychnaia Gosudarstvennaia Kimmissia po Ustanovleniu i Rassledovaniu Zlodeianii Sovershennykh Nemetsko-Fashistskimi Zakhvatchikami*, henceforth "special commission") provide an estimate of the number of people murdered in various places. The local committees of inquiry that acted as branches of the special commission used a system by which mass graves were exhumed, corpses were counted in the topmost layer, and the number was multiplied by the number

of layers of corpses; thus they were able to estimate the number of dead in any particular pit. This was hardly an accurate system, and often the local committees reported exaggerated numbers. Nonetheless and notwithstanding their inaccuracy, these documents also served in estimating the number of Jewish dead in certain places.

All these sources contribute to estimating the number of victims, but do not supply a full picture of all the towns, townships, and villages in which Jews were murdered nor of the real number of victims. Chapter 7, which deals with the number of Jews evacuated to the Soviet territories and the Jews who remained under German occupation, and those chapters that deal with the murder actions and the relevant numerical data serve as a starting point for evaluating the number of victims.

An estimate of the number of survivors is done vis-à-vis the estimated number of Jews remaining under German occupation; the discrepancy between the two numbers provides a basis for evaluating the number of victims. These estimations have been rounded upward or downward within limits of thousands. Thus the rounded number does not always conform with the number given in the relevant chapters describing events in any particular area. The numbers in the following pages should be seen as estimates that are as close to reality as possible. It is unlikely that additional data will ever be available that will enable a more accurate evaluation of the number of victims. This numerical summary takes the form of two cross-sections, one in a general cross-section between the annexed Soviet territories and the old territories, and one according to the Soviet republics.

Thousands of people—mixed race and Jewish partners in mixed marriages and their children did not register as Jews in the 1939 census within the old boundaries of the Soviet Union. To the German administration, all these were Jews, and the vast majority of those who remained in the occupied territories were Holocaust victims.² No statistical data exists on these casualties, but they can be estimated in the thousands. In the detailed estimates of casualties, no specific mention is made of them, and they are usually included in the overall number of casualties.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CASUALTIES AND SURVIVORS IN THE OLD TERRITORIES

Between 943,000 and 994,000 Jews remained in the old Soviet territories occupied by the German army up to late 1941. To this number should be added the 20,000 to 25,000 Jews, who lived in the territories of southern Russia, north Caucasus, and the city of Sevastopol, which were captured by the

Germans in summer 1942; a further estimated 10,000 (at least) Jewish refugees, mostly from Ukraine and Bessarabia, arrived in these southern territories and were unable to leave before the German occupation. Therefore, an approximate total of between 970,000 and 1,025,000 Jews found themselves under German occupation in the old Soviet territories.

In all the old territories, apart from the cities of Minsk and Slutsk in Belorussia and the territories occupied in 1942, the mass murder of Jews was carried out during the second half of 1941. The few Jews who survived this wave of murders in the ghettos and camps were murdered during the spring and summer of 1942. Since many thousands of Jews did not obey the Germans' roundup orders, they were not all murdered during the actions. Most of these, however, were hunted down and murdered during the two or three years of German occupation by German forces, who were assisted by local police forces. In their hunts for Jews in hiding, the police were helped by members of the local non-Jewish population. Individuals—a few dozen—in each city or region (in Kiev and Odessa it may have been a few hundred), managed to hide away or conceal their Jewishness throughout the years of occupation. In these territories, there was no organization that was active to help the Jews. The Jews were obliged to seek out their own way of survival—and only a few succeeded.

The number of Jews who remained under German occupation of the Soviet territories and survived the Holocaust was extremely small. The liberation of Belorussia began on June 22, 1944, and was completed within a fortnight. Minsk, which was liberated on July 3, was the only city in eastern Belorussia with a substantial number of Jewish survivors: about 5,000, out of the city's original Jewish population of between 70,000 and 75,000. Survivors from Minsk lived out the war in the forests, where they fought with the partisans or stayed in family camps. A few dozen of them survived in hiding or under false Aryan identities. A few dozen Jewish children survived by being sheltered in children's homes in the city. Further, it may be assumed that a few hundred Jews in the other towns and townships in east Belorussia survived the German occupation. In the forests of Mogilev, Vitebsk, and Gomel, a few hundred local Jews are estimated to have survived. Of the 380,000 Jews living in eastern Belorussia on the eve of occupation, between 230,000 and 240,000 Jews, including refugees from west Belorussia, remained under German occupation. Of these, only between 6,000 and 7,000 survived.³

The liberation of eastern Ukraine began in August 1943 with the capture of Kharkov, and by the end of the year the liberation of the entire region was completed, with the exception of the provinces of Odessa and Vinnitsa. These included Transnistria and were liberated in March 1944. Some 1,570,000 Jews

lived in eastern Ukraine on the eve of the German invasion; of these, between 680,000 and 710,000 Jews remained under occupation.⁴ Of these between 10,000 and 12,000 local Jews survived in Transnistria, to be liberated by the Soviet army. In the rest of eastern Ukraine, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Jews—some of whom fought with the partisans in the forests—were liberated. Of these, no more than a few hundred managed to hide their Jewish identity. Others belonged to groups of skilled workers who were kept in various places to service the local German administration and were able to survive and escape before the retreating Germans had time to murder them. The number of survivors in eastern Ukraine stood at between 13,000 and 17,000, so that the number of victims was between 667,000 and 693,000.

The territories of the Russian Soviet Republic, most of which was conquered by the Germans in October and November 1941, included the provinces of Smolensk (part of which was taken in mid-July 1941), Kalinin, Orel, Kursk, Rostov, and Crimea (apart from Sevastopol). Some 220,000 Jews lived in these regions on the eve of the German invasion, and between 30,000 and 40,000 remained under German occupation. A further 30,000 to 35,000 Jews remained in the territories of southern Russia that were conquered in the summer of 1942. The number of Jews in the Russian Federal Republic who remained under German occupation stood at between 60,000 and 75,000, of whom 4,000 Mountain Jews in the Nalchik region of north Caucasus survived after being liberated by the Soviet army. In the other occupied regions of the Russian republic, it would appear that no more than 1,000 to 1,500 Jews were saved, some in the course of the Soviet winter campaign at the end of 1941; the remainder were Jews who managed to hide their identity.⁵

The German murder machine in the occupied territories in the old regions of the Soviet Union achieved its objective. Of the between 970,000 and 1,025,000 Jews remaining in these territories, between 946,000 and 996,000 were murdered (table 5). The number of survivors was between 24,000 and 29,000—most of whom were concentrated in three locations: Minsk, Nalchik, and Transnistria. In Minsk the Jews were saved by taking the initiative and fighting; in Nalchik, the occupation was relatively short, and there was a dispute within the German administration about how to relate to the Mountain Jews; in Transnistria, lives were saved by the Romanian administration and a relatively quick liberation by the Soviet army. In the other areas of Russia, Belorussia, and Ukraine, the number of survivors was very low.

5. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS IN THE OLD TERRITORIES

REGION	UNDER GERMAN		VICTIMS
	OCCUPATION	SURVIVORS	
East Belorussia	230,000–240,000	6,000–7,000	224,000–233,000
East Ukraine	680,000–710,000	13,000–17,000	667,000–693,000
Russia	60,000–70,000	5,000	55,000–70,000
TOTAL	970,000–1,025,000	24,000–29,000	946,000–996,000

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VICTIMS AND
SURVIVORS IN THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES

In the regions annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939–40, not including the Bialystok area, the number of Jews who remained under German occupation stood at between 1,640,000 and 1,720,000; most were murdered in 1941–42. Those remaining in the ghettos and camps, especially in west Belorussia and west Ukraine, were murdered in 1943. Between the end of 1943 and the eve of liberation, several thousand Jews were still alive in ghettos and camps in the Baltic states. Just weeks before the arrival of the Soviets, the Jews were murdered or deported to the concentration camps in Germany. The retreating Germans left no ghetto or camp with Jews alive in it. The only place in the annexed territories in which Jews remained and the Soviet army liberated them in March 1944 was the city of Chernovtsy in north Bukovina, and about 16,000 Jews survived there.

The Baltic States

The total number of Jews living in Generalkommissariat Lithuania at the beginning of the occupation stood at between 205,000 and 210,000. Shortly before the liberation of Lithuania in July and August 1944, the camps in and around Vilnius, Kaunas, and Siauliai contained between 16,000 and 17,000 Jews, of whom several hundred were in hiding. In July 1944 the Germans shot between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews and deported a further 13,000 to camps in Germany, in order for them to join the workforce employed in the German war industry. From the Jews of Lithuania—including those in the Vilnius area—about 2,000 survived, half of whom had fled to the forests and fought with the partisans. The remainder had been in hiding or taken false Aryan identities. A further 7,000 to 8,000 Lithuanian

Jews, from those deported to Germany, were liberated by the Allied forces.⁶ Of the Lithuanian Jews who remained under German occupation, between 196,000 and 200,000 were murdered and between 9,000 and 10,000 survived.

Between 74,000 and 75,000 local Latvian Jews remained under German occupation, of whom between 6,000 and 7,000 were still alive in early 1942. As the Soviet army advanced to the Latvian borders in the summer of 1942, half were still alive, the remainder having been murdered or perished from the harsh conditions under which they were held. In August and September 1944 some 3,000 Jews were deported by sea from Latvia to Stutthof and from there to the concentration camps in Germany. Some of the deportees drowned. The remainder, especially those who were no longer fit for work, were murdered on arrival. With the liberation of Latvia, it appeared that some 200 Jews were still alive; they had either adopted false Aryan identities or gone into hiding. Of all the Latvian Jews deported to camps in Germany, about 1,000 survived. Between 73,000 and 74,000 Latvian Jews perished in the Holocaust.⁷

Between 1,200 and 1,500 Jews remained under German occupation in Estonia, and most of them were murdered in late 1941 and early 1942. A few individuals—no more than a *minyán*—found refuge among the local non-Jews and survived. Of the 280,000 to 285,000 Jews in the Baltic states, including Vilnius, who remained under German occupation, between 270,000 and 274,000 perished, and only 10,000 to 11,000 survived.

West Belorussia and West Ukraine

In west Belorussia and west Ukraine, between 1,135,000 and 1,200,000 Jews remained under German occupation. This number does not include the 65,000 to 70,000 Jews from the Vilnius region, who are included with the Jews of Lithuania in evaluating the numbers of victims and survivors.

The number of Jews remaining under German occupation in the regions of west Belorussia and included in this study (the provinces of Novogrudok, Grodno, the eastern parts of the Vilnius district, and the regions of Grodno and Volkovysk in Bialystok district) stood at between 340,000 and 360,000. Most were murdered in the course of actions carried out in 1942. After this wave of murders, there remained between 21,000 and 22,000 in ghettos and camps in these regions, which were liquidated along with their inhabitants by November 1943. Jewish groups remained in the forests as members of the Soviet partisans or in family camps, and their number stood at between 12,500 to 15,500; between 7,000 and 9,000 survived.⁸ A further 1,000 to 2,000 Jews should be added to these survivors. They had saved themselves by going into hiding or by using false documents and passing as Aryans. The number of Jews who perished in west Belorussia, therefore,

can be estimated at between 332,000 and 350,000 and those who survived the German occupation as between 8,000 and 11,000.

In the regions of Volhynia, between 220,000 and 240,000 Jews remained under German occupation, and they were annihilated during 1942. The few survivors in several places after 1942 were murdered by mid-1943. Between 4,200 and 4,400 Jews sought refuge or fought as partisans in the forests of Volhynia; an estimated 2,500 survived. A further 1,000 to 2,000 saved themselves by going into hiding or passing as Aryans. So between 3,000 and 5,000 survived in the area of Volhynia. The victims numbered between 217,000 and 235,000.

Eastern Galicia

Eastern Galicia was part of the General Government, and between 575,000 and 600,000 Jews remained there under German occupation. Thousands had already been murdered in 1941, but the vast majority were murdered in 1942 and the first half of 1943. According to a June 30, 1943, report presented by Katzmänn, SS and Police Leader in eastern Galicia, 434,329 Jews had been murdered in eastern Galicia by this date; a total of 21,156 Jews were still alive in labor camps. In fact, the number of Jews in camps in mid-1943 was higher by several thousands than that cited by Katzmänn. The report did not include those Jews who had been murdered in pogroms, nor the thousands of Jews who had died in ghettos and camps of starvation, disease, and in the course of selections and executions of people who were found unfit for work. In the labor camps, the Jews were murdered by the end of August 1943 and in the Janovsky camp in Lvov by November 1943.

The remaining Jews in eastern Galicia after November 1943 — excluding the hundreds employed in the petrol industry in Drohobych and Borislav — were hiding in the forests in family camps or in the ghettos, or they had used false documentation to pass as Aryans. Of between 2,000 and 3,000 Jewish partisans and members of family camps, about 1,000 survived the Holocaust. The number of survivors in eastern Galicia who had saved themselves by going into hiding or using false Aryan identities is estimated as having been greater than that of the survivors of the forests.

In late September 1944, two months after the liberation of Lvov, the unofficial committee organized by Jews began registering the survivors. Of the 3,400 Jews who registered, more than 2,000 were women. There were about 740 survivors in Ternopol; 400 in Drohobych; 100 in Stanislaw (Ivano-Frankovsk), and 200 in Borislav. In some of the other towns, there were only a few dozen survivors.⁹ An estimated 5,000 survivors were concentrated in the larger towns, but this number also included Jews from the neighboring towns and townships, who were driven to the larger cities by anti-Semitism and loneliness and in order to protect them-

6. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS IN THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES

REGION	UNDER GERMAN		
	OCCUPATION	SURVIVORS	VICTIMS
Belorussia and Ukraine	1,200,000–1,135,000	20,000–25,000	1,115,000–1,175,000
Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)	280,000–285,000	10,000–11,000	270,000–274,000
Bessarabia and North Bukovina	227,000–232,000	51,000–53,000	176,000–179,000
TOTAL	1,642,000–1,717,000	81,000–89,000	1,561,000–1,628,000

selves from the UPA groups, who continued with their activity. Assuming that several thousand Jews from eastern Galicia were rescued and liberated by the Allied armies in concentration camps in Germany, the total number of survivors in this region was between 7,000 and 10,000. In eastern Galicia, between 570,00 and 590,000 Jews perished in the Holocaust.

Of the 1,200,000 to 1,135,000 Jews who remained under German occupation in the territories of west Belorussia and west Ukraine, between 1,115,000 and 1,175,000 perished and between 20,000 and 25,000 survived (table 6).

Bessarabia and North Bukovina

Between 227,000 and 232,000 Jews remained under German occupation in Bessarabia (now Moldova) and North Bukovina, and between 87,000 and 92,000 were murdered between late June and late August 1941. From September to December 1941, some 120,000 were banished from these areas to Transnistria. About 20,000 Jews remained in Chernovtsy, and only a few hundred remained in all of Bessarabia. A further 4,500 Jews were banished from Chernovtsy to Transnistria in 1942. Of all the Jews of Bessarabia and north Bukovina who were deported to Transnistria, over 70 percent (about 90,000) were murdered or died of starvation, disease, cold, and persecution; between 36,000 and 38,000 Jews survived. Between 176,000 and 179,000 of the Jews of Bessarabia and north Bukovina perished, and between 51,000 and 53,000 survived the Holocaust, including 15,000 Jews from Chernovtsy (table 7).

7. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS
IN THE OCCUPIED SOVIET REPUBLICS

REPUBLIC	UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION	SURVIVORS	VICTIMS
Belorussia	570,000–600,000	14,000–18,000	556,000–582,000
Ukraine	1,475,000–1,550,000	23,000–32,000	1,452,000–1,518,000
Russia	60,000–75,000	5,000	55,000–70,000
Moldavia	227,000–232,000	51,000–53,000	176,000–179,000
Lithuania	205,000–210,000	9,000–10,000	196,000–200,000
Latvia	74,000–75,000	1,000	73,000–74,000
Estonia	1,000–1,500		1,000–1,500
TOTAL	2,612,000–2,743,500	103,000–119,000	2,509,000–2,624,500

NOTE: For methodological reasons, Moldavia totals also include Jews from Bessarabia, which was a central part of Moldavia (today, Moldova), and north Bukovina, which is part of Ukraine.

This chapter details the number of Holocaust victims in the occupied territories of Soviet Union who are defined as “direct victims” and the Jews who were murdered by the Germans and their collaborators. The number also includes those Jews who died of starvation and disease in ghettos and camps and a number of Jews who died of natural causes during the occupation, since most of death by natural causes was influenced significantly by conditions in the ghettos. To the number of direct victims among the Jews of the Soviet Union there must be added an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Jewish prisoners of war who were murdered by the Germans merely for being Jewish.

Apart from the direct losses, the Soviet Jews experienced losses in the Holocaust that were “not direct.” These were the 120,000 Jewish soldiers who fell in battle. Among the indirect losses, there were thousands of Jewish inhabitants of Leningrad, who died in the bombings or of starvation, disease, or cold during the 900 days that the city was under siege. During the 73-day siege on Odessa, many Jews were killed in the bombings, as were Jews in other towns and cities and on the roads. Among the Jewish refugees to the Soviet Union, many thousands died

of starvation and disease. These losses are not included as “Holocaust victims,” but they all lost their lives in the course of World War II as a result of German aggression. This study does not deal with the indirect losses, but we have seen fit to point out their existence and estimate their number as being in the hundreds of thousands. All the countries, including the Soviet Union, included indirect losses in their overall death toll from World War II. The number of Jewish survivors mentioned in this study refers only to the survivors among those Jews who remained under German occupation. It does not include those Jews who were evacuated or who escaped into the depths of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

The Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union was the beginning of the last stage of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” in Europe—the physical and total extermination of the Jews. The Soviet Jews were the first Jews in German-occupied Europe against whom the Nazi extermination machine was put into operation. It started with the first days of German invasion, on June 22, 1941, and lasted until German capitulation on May 8, 1945. The extermination of the Soviet Jews was part of the ideological and physical preparations for Operation Barbarossa, the war against the Soviet Union, and found its expressions in a series of orders issued toward the invasion.

According to Hitler’s order on March 3, 1941, the OKW had to prepare an appendix to Directive no. 21 (Operation Barbarossa), saying that “The forthcoming campaign is a collision between two different ideologies and that the Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia must be eliminated.” This was the first document mentioning the destruction of Jews, as part of Germany’s preparations for the attack on the Soviet Union. It did not say that all the Jews had to be eliminated, but limited it to Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia. On March 13, 1941, the OKW issued a directive that entrusted Himmler, the Reichsführer SS, on behalf of Hitler, with special tasks for the preparations of the political administration in the occupied territories. This document granted Himmler and the SS the authority to liquidate all elements belonging, in their opinion, to the Soviet “political system,” including the Jews who were defined by them as the leading elite of the communist state.

To carry out this directive, an agreement was reached between the army and Heydrich, according to which the Einsatzgruppen would be able to carry out their activities, which would involve persecutions and murder of civilians, in areas under military authority and with logistical support from the army. This agreement made the German army party to the Einsatzgruppen criminal actions and thus responsible for them.

On March 30, 1941, in a speech before senior army officers, Hitler defined the forthcoming war with the Soviet Union as a “struggle between two opposing

ideologies” and as a “war of destruction.” In the spirit of this definition of the war, the OKW released three directives. A directive dated May 13, concerning military jurisdiction in the regions of Operation Barbarossa, essentially stated that army personnel would not be punished for acts of cruelty toward civilians. On May 19, the OKW announced that the war against the Soviet Union required the use of ruthless and determined means against the saboteurs, partisans, Bolshevik propagandists, and Jews. This order related to all the Jews, not only to Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia, and thereby all Jews were marked as real enemies who endangered the rear of the German army. “Ruthless and determined means” meant death by execution. The third document was issued by the OKW on June 6, the so-called commissars order, according to which political commissars, when captured, were to be executed.

All these directives and orders were an expression and translation by OKW of Hitler’s definition of “war of destruction” and preparation for the elimination of “Jewish Bolshevism.” Still, they did not include a direct and clear order for the total murder of Soviet Jews, although they were a step in this direction. Hitler’s speech on January 30, 1939, in which he said that if there is a world war, the result will be “the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe,” was defined by him at the time as a prophecy, which stressed the words “if there is a war.” But Hitler’s words about a “war of destruction” against the Soviet Union and Jewish-Bolshevism, on the eve of the invasion, was not another prophecy. Rather it signaled to Himmler, the SS, the army, and government bureaucracy a more concrete intention deriving from his January 1939 annihilation speech. This was especially true with regard to Soviet Jews. Yet it still did not constitute an order for total extermination.

Moreover, among the orders given by Heydrich and some of his subordinates from RSHA to the Einsatzgruppen on the eve of the invasion into Soviet Union was an order to kill Jews, but not an order to kill all the Jews. The order to kill Jews was followed by the mass murder of Jewish males in the period between the end of June and the middle of August 1941, carried out by the Einsatzgruppen, Order Police battalions, and SS units subordinated to Kommandostab Himmler. The murder of Jewish males was consistent with the concept, pointed out in the OKW order of May 19, that the Jews, like saboteurs and partisans, threatened security in the German rear areas. This, of course, was not the reality. The Jews, shocked and frightened by the unexpected German occupation and the wave of discriminatory laws and persecution, did not endanger the security of German rear areas. Their only aim and activity was survival.

The murder of the Jewish males was a temporary stage in the extermination process of Soviet Jews. The turning point, the decision to perpetrate the mass murder of all Jews in occupied areas of the Soviet Union, including women and

children, took place during Himmler's tour of those territories, from the end of July through mid-August 1941. During discussions he held there with the HSSPF and EG commanders, the murder policy coalesced.

The basic and necessary factors behind this decision were ideological: anti-Semitism, racist theories, and Hitler's statements, which signaled and were understood by Himmler and Heydrich as his wish for the extermination of the Jews. These ideological factors were reinforced by the following utilitarian issues that influenced and stimulated the timing of the decision of total annihilation of the Jews:

The issue of pacification and security in the rear areas, which was discussed during Himmler's meetings with the HSSPF, and the prevailing but groundless assumption that the Jews, including women and children, endangered the security.

Food supply difficulties encountered by the German army at the front and rear areas, already in the first months of Operation Barbarossa. The Nazis regarded the Jews as useless consumers of food and believed that annihilating them would reduce the number of mouths requiring food. This provision problem had some influence on the decision to kill all the Jews, but it was far from being a decisive one.

The imminent victorious end of the war, which might come before the arrival of winter, as reflected at the meeting held in Hitler's headquarters on July 16, 1941. Hitler and Himmler assumed that annihilation actions of Jews, which could be carried out in turbulent wartime, would be more problematic to carry out and harder to conceal in peacetime. Therefore, they had to be carried out immediately.

Himmler did not issue a general written order, but verbal statements and discussions he had with the HSSPF produced the decision to intensify the murder of Jews, including women and children. This decision was a result of ideological reasons from above—Hitler and Himmler—and utilitarian considerations raised by local SS and army authorities. The method and the exact timetable, and the realization of the extermination actions, were left in the hands of the HSSPF and EG commanders in cooperation with the local military and civilian administrations. These total extermination actions started in the second half of August 1941, and within weeks they had spread over all the occupied territories.

The Holocaust in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union was in many aspects different from other areas of Europe under German occupation:

The ideological/propaganda aspect of the attack on the Soviet Union stressed its objective as waging war and destroying Jewish Bolshevism. In no other episode of German aggression against other countries in Europe were Jews mentioned as an excuse for the aggression.

The Soviet Jews were the first to be physically and totally annihilated. As a rule, they were shot in locations close to their homes and not deported to the death camps and gas chambers to which most of Europe's Jews were brought. This method of mass murder required the direct and active participation of large numbers of Germans and local collaborators.

The German army and the military administration were directly involved in anti-Jewish policies and acts of annihilation.

The German civil administration was involved and bears responsibility for anti-Jewish policies, including the murder of the Jews.

Tens of thousands of local collaborators—civilians and police—participated, and in many cases they were the major or even the sole force in the extermination actions. A wave of murderous pogroms carried out by local people swept many localities in the first days of the German invasion.

The local populations, contrary to other places in Europe, witnessed and were aware of the annihilation of their Jewish neighbors, which was carried out almost openly before them. The majority of local residents were neutral bystanders and observers of the events they witnessed.

The Righteous among the Nations acted in a hostile environment. They risked their lives and the lives of their families, in spite of the fact that the punishment for extending help to Jews was more severe than in other countries of Europe.

The situation on the German-Soviet front and the prolongation of the war forced local German authorities to postpone the murder of working Jews.

The partisan warfare in the German rear areas prompted the execution of extermination actions.

Mischlinge were regarded as Jews and executed, contrary to their fate in Germany and other European countries.

Soviet Jewish prisoners of war were executed. Jewish prisoners of war from other armies were kept in the camps, and in some places (Poland), the privates among them were sent to ghettos and shared the fate of the Jews there.

The Jewish armed resistance in the ghettos and partisan groups in the forests were active on a much more wider scale than elsewhere in Europe.

The percentage of Soviet Jews who survived the German occupation was the lowest in comparison with the other occupied countries.

In addition to the large number of Jewish victims, one of the results of the Holocaust in the occupied territories of Soviet Union was the total destruction and disappearance of thousands of small Jewish communities in townships, the so-called shtetl, and Jewish agriculture settlements. The shtetl was a unique phenomenon in east Europe, where Jews lived for many generations. Shtetls and the Jewish villages were not restored after the Holocaust. The few survivors and those of the Soviet Jews who returned from evacuation chose the larger towns and cities as venues to rebuild their lives.

The Soviet Jews, including the survivors, did not find respite. After the war they faced Stalin's terror, the "black years," which continued until Stalin's death.

Epilogue

The Holocaust and Soviet Governing Authorities

THE HOLOCAUST IN SOVIET-GERMAN RELATIONS FROM HITLER'S RISE TO POWER UNTIL JUNE 22, 1941

Like on most other issues in Soviet Union, it was Stalin who determined official Soviet attitudes regarding the annihilation of the Jews of Europe, especially those of the occupied Soviet territories. These attitudes were, in no small measure, influenced by Stalin's anti-Semitic sentiments. Stalin did not value human life. He had no qualms about executing people who were closest to him, including members of his own family. For a man like this, the persecution and mass murder of Jews by Nazi Germany did not arouse any particular humanitarian feelings. Further, the Soviet official position on anti-Jewish persecutions and the Holocaust was influenced by political considerations: the overall relations between the Soviet Union and Germany and propaganda reasons within the Soviet Union. Three separate periods may be defined in the Soviet stance on the Holocaust:

From Hitler's rise to power until the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty on August 23, 1939.

From the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty up to the German invasion on June 22, 1941.

From the invasion up to Germany's defeat in May 1945.

The Period between Hitler's Rise to Power and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty

This period refers to the persecution of Jews within Germany and the territories annexed to it up to the outbreak of World War II: Austria and Czechoslovakia. From time to time the Soviet press carried information on anti-Jewish persecution, but there was no condemnation of this persecution. The Soviet Yiddish-language

press gave broader expression to the persecution, but in limited circulation. Information supplied by the Yiddish press aimed at pointing out the secure conditions under which the Soviet Jews lived, as compared with their brethren in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, where anti-Semitism was rife.

During this period, neither Stalin nor others in the Soviet leadership made any mention of the anti-Jewish persecution in Germany. Instead, the Soviets made declarations that were aimed at bringing them closer to Germany, regardless of Germany's racist policies. Molotov made this very clear in his January 28, 1935, speech to the Supreme Soviet.¹

On November 18, 1938, *Pravda* published an editorial, the first to denounce the persecution of Jews, in reaction to the November 9–10 “Kristallnacht.” The article described the cruelty toward the Jews in Germany and said: “With deep exasperation, the Soviet nation is following the dirty and bloody events in Germany. It has experienced too much in the past and is fully aware of the way in which the capitalists and landlords used anti-Jewish incitement in order to keep holding the workers and the peasants under the yoke of the rulers.” In response to Kristallnacht, protest meetings were held in Moscow and other Soviet cities against Germany's anti-Semitic policies. *Pravda* published the declaration accepted at the Moscow protest meeting, according to which, “We, the representatives of the city of Moscow, have gathered . . . to raise a voice of protest and horror against the inhuman acts of cruelty committed by the fascists against Germany's helpless Jewish population. . . . We join our voices to those of humanity in general in expressing our sympathy for the victims of the riots against the Jews of Germany.”²

The main incentive behind this unusual reaction was Germany's annexation of the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland and the growing German threat to the Soviet Union. This reaction also reflected a desire to join the other European countries in responding to Kristallnacht and to generate favorable public opinion in these countries in the face of the common enemy, Germany. It was a public reaction, not an official Soviet government statement. The authorities clearly did not wish to anger Hitler.

The Period between the Ribbentrop–Molotov Treaty and the German Invasion

The Ribbentrop–Molotov treaty was signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939. Immediately all reports on Germany's persecution of Jews ceased entirely in the Soviet press. All expressions by the Soviet leaders concerning the Germans became friendly. Even the outbreak of war was described as Polish provocation, based on the false “fact” that the Poles were the first to open fire. Germany was described as a peace-loving country, while France and Great Britain were pre-

sented as rejecters of peace.³ News of events in the German-occupied countries in Europe, especially the German-occupied territories of Poland, reached the Soviet authorities from various sources: intelligence, embassies, and Soviet correspondents in Germany. One of the important sources on anti-Jewish persecution was provided by Jewish refugees who had managed to escape across the borders into Soviet territory. The Soviet media, including the Yiddish press, published nothing of this. Nor was any mention made of it by Soviet leaders. There was a deliberate policy of silence in order to maintain the friendly relations with Germany. The Soviet Jews, especially those in the old territories, knew little or nothing of the fate of their brethren in the German-occupied territories.

As a result of this policy of silence, large numbers of Jews paid with their lives after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. They did not know what to expect under German occupation and therefore did not do all they could to escape in time. In his book on the murder of the Jews in Babi Yar, Anatoly Kuznetsov wrote:

When the order [to report and march in the direction of Babi Yar] was first published, nine Jews out of every ten had never heard a word about the Nazi atrocities against the Jews. Right up to the outbreak of the war, Soviet newspapers had been doing nothing but praising and glorifying Hitler as the Soviet Union's best friend and had said nothing about the position of the Jews in Germany and Poland.⁴

THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES AND THE HOLOCAUST FROM THE GERMAN INVASION UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR

This period saw the physical annihilation of the Jews of Europe, and, as opposed to the two previous periods, the Soviet authorities' attitude toward the Holocaust touched directly on their Jewish citizens remaining in the German-occupied territories against whom the German murder machine was directed. Even before the invasion, the Soviet leadership knew that Jews were being persecuted in the German-controlled areas of Europe, that Jews were being subjected to forced labor, to living in ghettos, and to executions. Although it did not yet include mass extermination, this information did not give the Jews any preferential treatment with regard to evacuation at the beginning of the war.

By the fall of 1941, the Soviet leadership had irrefutable information that masses of Jews were being murdered in the territories occupied by the Germans. This information came from Soviet soldiers, who had spent months in German rear areas and had succeeded in reaching Soviet territories after their units had

been defeated in battle. On their way through the German rear area, they had witnessed or heard of the mass executions. Many soldiers had escaped German captivity and returned to the Soviet front lines. As POWs, they had witnessed the murders and were often taken to dig the pits in which the victims were buried. All returning soldiers were interrogated by army intelligence and the NKVD. This information was passed through military political channels (Commissars) or through the NKVD, to the Soviet authorities in Moscow. According to the October 31, 1941, report of the interrogation of Lieutenants Polishuk and Antsiferov, who escaped German captivity and crossed the front lines:

When we were in the POW camp in the suburb of Nikolaev, we saw the way in which Germans shot Jews who had been brought to the site, entire families. There were among them many women and children. The wounded among the adults and almost all the children were thrown into the pits when they were still alive, and this is how they were buried. . . . In Stalino, all the Jews were brought together, supposedly to be sent to work. . . . We saw how a large group of them, several thousands of people, were shot alongside one of the mineshafts.⁵

German prisoners of war also provided information on mass murders. By November 1941 Soviet authorities knew that thousands of Jews had been murdered in Lvov, Minsk, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, and other towns.⁶ In the course of their winter offensive, from November 1941 until February 1942, the Soviets liberated the cities of Kalinin, Kaluga, Velizh, and other places and found that all the Jews who had been under German occupation had been murdered. By the end of 1941, Stalin and the Soviet leadership had plenty of reliable evidence that total annihilation of the Jews was being carried out in the German-occupied territories. A booklet published in 1941 by the Soviet government publishing house, the “Gospolitizdat,” under the title *Cruelty of German Fascists*, included information on the mass murder of thousands of people in Lvov, Brest-Litovsk, Minsk, and elsewhere. Jews are mentioned alongside people of other nationalities. However, there is no doubt that information regarding these murders referred to Jews, and the authorities were fully aware of this.⁷

Stalin's Speeches and Orders of the Day

Stalin's attitude and propaganda policy concerning German extermination of Jews can be derived from his wartime speeches and orders of the day. On July 3, 1941, Stalin delivered his first speech of the war to the nation and the army. In this speech, he explained the reasons behind the Red Army's retreat, justified the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty, called for partisan warfare in the German

rear area, and said, “Germany aims to reinstate the regime of estate owners and czars, to destroy the national culture and national sovereignty of the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Belorussians, the Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tartars, Moldovians, Georgians, and other nations of the Soviet Union.”⁸ He made no mention of the Jews. In his speech on November 6, 1941, Stalin said, among other things:

Hitler’s rabble kills and rapes the peace-loving citizens of our motherland. . . . They carry out Middle Ages pogroms against the Jews, as was carried out by the czarist regime. Hitler’s party . . . is a medieval reactionary party and a party of “Black Hundred” pogroms. . . . Hitler is saying that if we wish to establish the Great German empire, we must first annihilate the Slavic people: Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians.⁹

This, as far as is known, is the only time throughout the war that Stalin referred publicly to the Jews. But, even here, he did not say that Jews were being subjected to mass murder, but compared their situation under German occupation with that during the czarist pogroms, which paled in comparison. This speech emphasizes Soviet wartime propaganda, in other words, that the Slavic nations were the object of annihilation (which was untrue), not the Jews.

Stalin’s speeches and orders of the day were lengthy and cover 300 pages of the book, parts of which are quoted here. They made minute reference to the fate of the civilian population in the occupied territories and totally ignored the Jews, apart from his November 6 speech. Following the victory at Stalingrad in early 1943, the Soviet army found evidence in the liberated cities that the entire Jewish population had been murdered, but Stalin’s speeches contained no mention of this fact.

Molotov’s Notes

An important source on Soviet attitudes concerning the murder of the Jews in the Holocaust is supplied by the four notes sent by Molotov to the ambassadors of countries with which the Soviet Union maintained diplomatic relations. The notes related to the terror and destruction carried out by the Germans in the occupied territories. The notes were also published in the Soviet press at that time. The first, titled “Acts of Cruelty on the Part of the German Authorities against Soviet POWs,” was sent on November 25, 1941.¹⁰ The note makes no mention of the fact that Jewish POWs and Kommissars were executed as soon as they were taken prisoner. The second note was published on January 6, 1942, and did refer to the Jews.

The German occupiers . . . have no qualms about hurting the national feelings of the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Belorussians, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Moldovians, as well as individuals (*otdelnykh lits*) among the other nations that populate the Soviet Union . . . the Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Azars, Tadzhiks, and other Soviet nations. . . . A terrible massacre and pogrom was perpetrated by the German occupiers in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. Over several days, the German robbers shot and killed 52,000 men, women, old people, and children. . . . Soviet citizens who escaped from Kiev describe a terrible picture of one of these mass executions: a large number of Jews was assembled in the Jewish cemetery in Kiev, including women and children of all ages, and shot with automatic weapons. . . . The German occupiers carried out similar massacres in other Ukrainian towns. This slaughter was directed mainly against defenseless Jews of the working classes. According to partial data, at least 6,000 people were shot in Lvov; in Odessa [the number] exceeds 8,000.¹¹

The mention of the Kiev massacre, which took place “over several days,” refers to the mass murder of Jews at Babi Yar in late September 1941. Although all the victims were Jews, Molotov included “Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews” among the 52,000 murdered, in an attempt to downplay the singularity of the Jews’ fate. However, this note does provide details of the thousands of Jews who were murdered in Lvov, Odessa, Kamenets-Podolski, Dnepropetrovsk, Mariupol, and Kerch. Readers of the note could get the impression that Jews in the occupied territories had a different fate from that of the other nations and that they were subject to mass annihilation. Still, this was not said outright in the note, although the Soviet leaders knew by then of the total extermination of Jews in the occupied territories.

Molotov’s third note, published on April 27, 1942, also dealt with the cruelty of the Germans in the occupied territories. The note stressed yet again that the Hitlerites intended to destroy the “Russians, the Ukrainians, the Belorussians, and other nations in the Soviet Union.” It detailed the murder of 3,000 civilians in Taganrog on October 27, 1941, of 7,000 inhabitants of the Crimean town of Kerch, of 6,000 people in Vitebsk, of 10,000 in Pinsk, of 12,000 in Minsk, and of 14,000 in Kharkov. Nowhere in the note does Molotov mention that the murdered victims were Jews. With regard to the massacre in the Crimean city of Feodosia, Molotov wrote that the Germans murdered more than 1,000 of the inhabitants, 245 of them “Crimean Tatars.”¹² But they were not Tatars; they were Krimchaks (Crimean Jews). The policy of concealing the fact that the victims were Jews is very clear in this note as compared with the second note. It can be assumed that in the period between January 1942, when the second note was published, and

April 1942, when the third note was published, a decision had been made to conceal even further the fact that German policy against the Jews differed from that toward other nations in the occupied territories. The fourth note, published on May 11, 1943, related to the deportation of Soviet citizens to forced labor camps in Germany. Here, too, there was no mention of Jews.

Not once did Stalin, in his speeches and orders of the day, and Molotov, in his diplomatic notes, mention the total annihilation of the Jews. Any mention they made of persecution or murder of Jews was marginal. And this minor reference to anti-Jewish persecution was made only during the first six months of the war. After January 1942, when the Soviet government knew for certain that the Jews were being annihilated, and up to the end of the war, neither Stalin nor his counterparts in the Soviet leadership made any public reference to the matter.

In spite of the policy of silence, the Soviet regime was forced to publish two more documents relating to the extermination of the Jews. On December 17, 1942, the Soviet media published a joint declaration, signed by twelve allied countries who formed the anti-German coalition. The declaration, which was initiated by Great Britain, was issued simultaneously in London, Moscow, and Washington. The declaration referred to the total annihilation of the Jews of Europe, which was under way, and promised that those responsible for this crime would not escape the punishment they deserved. By referring to the total annihilation of the Jews, the declaration differentiated between the Jews and the rest of the nations, which did not conform with the way in which the Soviet Union presented Nazi terror policies. The Soviet Union could do nothing but join the mutual declaration. Refusal to do so would have been frowned upon by world public opinion. In order to weaken the impression made by this declaration and to tie it to previous Soviet declarations, the Soviet government issued a declaration of its own two days later. In this one, which was full of verbal twists and turns, the Soviets again tied the murder of Jews to that of other nations:

The crimes and atrocities committed by the Hitlerite robbers, rapists, and hangmen against peace-loving Soviet citizens have already been revealed to the entire world. The large majority of victims of these bloody riots are farmers, laborers, clerks, and members of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian intelligentsia. Many are the victims among the Lithuanians, the Latvians, and the Estonians, among the Moldavians and people of the Karelo-Finnish Republic. The Jewish minority in the Soviet population, which is not very large in number, has suffered particularly at the hands of the blood-thirsty Hitlerite animals.¹³

On July 21, 1943, *Pravda* published several articles on the situation in the occupied territories. One was by Jan Kalbarzin, first secretary of the Communist Party in Latvia, who wrote that “the Nazis have murdered over 150,000 sons and daughters of the Latvian nation.” In another article, A. Snechkus, first secretary of the Communist Party in Lithuania, wrote that “over two years, some 200,000 Lithuanians were murdered or tortured to death by the Nazis.” Not a word was written about the Jews of those countries, nor was the fact mentioned that, barring a few thousands, all the victims in Lithuania and Latvia were Jews. On the other hand, most of those who participated in the murder of Jews there were local Latvian and Lithuanian collaborators. On July 26, 1943, *Pravda* published an article under the heading “Hitler’s War of Destruction,” according to which “Hitler has developed cannibalistic plans to annihilate the Slavs . . . to expel and exterminate Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Yugoslavs, Ukrainians, Belorussians. . . . During the first months of their administration they exterminated many thousands of peace-loving citizens in Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, Vitebsk, Brest, and Lvov.” Jews are not mentioned, and the article makes it clear that Jews were not included in Hitler’s campaign of destruction.

The Special Commission

On November 2, 1942, the Soviet authorities established the Special State Commission for Determining and Interrogating the War Crimes Committed by the German-Fascist Occupiers in the occupied Soviet territories (henceforth “special commission”). Nikolai Shvernik was appointed to head the commission, and its members included Andrei Zhdanov. Both were members of the Politburo and among the leading personalities in the Soviet hierarchy. Subcommittees were established in the various republics, in subordination to the central commission. Nikita Khrushchev was appointed to head the Ukrainian committee, and Panteleimon Ponomarenko headed the Belorussian committee. Both were first secretaries of the Communist Party in their republics, which indicates the importance attached to the commission by the Soviet leadership. Local commissions were established in each liberated town and region, in order to collect evidence and testimonies on events under German occupation. The commissions focused on three issues:

1. The damage to the Soviet economy caused by the Germans: destruction of factories and damage to agriculture, cultural institutions, homes, etc.
2. The exploitation of Soviet manpower in forced labor, including those who were sent to work in Germany.
3. Terror against the Soviet population.

The first two clauses aimed at assessing the financial damage caused by the Germans to the Soviet economy so that, after its surrender, Germany would be forced to pay reparations. The commission evaluated the damage at 679 billion rubles. The ruble was at that time higher than the dollar. The third clause, the terror, included the murder of Jews. The commission aimed at collecting incriminating evidence and prosecuting those responsible for the terror. Reports that were published during the course of the war had a propaganda value—to show the suffering Soviet public and the soldiers that the war, which was being waged against a cruel enemy, was a just one.

In testimonies gathered by the local committees in each town in the Soviet Union, the local inhabitants of the occupied territories recalled events they had witnessed. They described the persecution and murder of Jews, as they saw and heard them. The testimonies were written down verbatim, and clearly included the word *Jews* as the main victims. In reports provided by the local commissions, however, the word *Jews* disappeared gradually, to be replaced by the term *Soviet citizens*. In reports and documents produced by the district commissions, which were based on the local committees' reports, the word *Jews* was even rarer. In the reports from the republican committees, Khrushchev's report relating to Ukraine, and Ponomarenko's report on Belorussia, the term *Jews* was almost entirely eliminated.¹⁴ It was a continuation of the line defined by Stalin in his speeches and by Molotov in his notes. The special commission published seven extensive reports in 1943 that dealt with the atrocities committed by the Germans in the occupied territories. Jews are mentioned in only one of the reports. In all the other reports the victims are referred to as Soviet citizens. Before publishing the first reports, Shvernik approached Georgi Alexandrov, head of propaganda for the Communist Central Committee, in order to "approve publication." Alexandrov edited several parts of the reports, replacing the word *Jews* with *Soviet citizens* to create the impression that German murder actions were aimed at all the nations in the occupied Soviet territories.¹⁵

Publications of the special commission's reports became the main source of Soviet information on the Nazi murders and atrocities in the occupied Soviet territories to be broadcast via the media. In general, on days when the reports were published, the issue was dealt with extensively by the press. The following report provided by the special commission is typical of the Soviet attitude toward the murder of Jews and the way in which the matter is presented to the general public. On July 14, 1943, the special commission published a report on the murder of 6,000 Soviet citizens in Krasnodar; no mention is made of their being Jews. Like other Soviet newspapers, *Pravda* published this report. The paper's editorial on July 14 quotes a booklet published by the German army that was found in

the pocket of a fallen German soldier. The booklet supposedly gave instructions to “Kill every Russian, every Soviet person.” It is unlikely that such a booklet ever existed, but the story does stress once again the Soviet line of propaganda, according to which the Russians were the main target for annihilation.

An editorial and an announcement published by the special commission on the massacre in Babi Yar in Kiev gives the information that “during the period under German occupation, more than 195,000 civilians were murdered, whose only crime was that they are Soviet people. . . . On September 29, 1941, Nazi villains assembled thousands of peace-loving Soviet citizens at the corner of Melnikovsky and Dokhturov Streets and led them to Babi Yar, where their valuables were confiscated and they were shot to death.”¹⁶

On September 29, 1941, thousands of Kiev’s Jews were murdered, but the word *Jew* was unacceptable to the members of the special commission. On July 14, 1944, the special commission published a communiqué on the acts of torture and murder carried out by the Germans and Romanians in Odessa and other regions of Transnistria. The communiqué included a description of the following massacres: 25,000 people were burned after being locked inside warehouses in Odessa on October 19, 1941; the execution of 54,000 people was carried out in December 1941 in the Bogdanovka camp; the murder of 22,000 people in the Domanevka camp and 35,000 people in the region of Mostovesk between December 1941 and March 1942. The victims were not identified as Jews.¹⁷

On September 20, 1944, the special commission published a communiqué about Minsk. With regard to the Jews, “In a special camp-ghetto . . . the Germans imprisoned 100,000 Jews. The witnesses . . . testified that the camp commandant, Rider, and his men humiliated the prisoners, tortured them, and shot them for no reason.” The document went on to describe the Malyi Trostenets concentration camp, in which “peace-loving citizens were imprisoned who had been sentenced to death.” Not a word was said about the fact that the Jews imprisoned in the “special camp-ghetto” were nearly all murdered, most of them in Malyi Trostenets. In an article in *Pravda*, Ponomarenko, at that time chairman of the Belorussian council of commissars (government), in the wake of the special commission’s communiqué, wrote that, “120,000 people were tortured and murdered in Minsk. Among them were peace-loving citizens of Minsk, POWs, and many thousands of Jews who had been brought to the Minsk ghetto from Hamburg.”¹⁸ No mention was made of the murdered Jews of Minsk. They were included among the “peace-loving citizens of Minsk.” It was all right to mention the murder of foreign Jews, like those from Hamburg. They were not “Soviet citizens.”

Here and there a small deviation occurred in this policy of ignoring the plight of the Jews in the special commission’s publications. In the commission’s report

on Lvov, it was said that “during the existence of the ghetto . . . the Germans exterminated above 130,000 people. Some of them were shot in the ghetto, some in the Janovska camp, and others were sent to be exterminated in Belzec.”¹⁹ According to the commission’s report on the atrocities committed by the Germans in Lithuania, “Many thousands of the inhabitants of Lithuania were exterminated by the German fascist hangmen. They began with the total annihilation of the Jews and then planned to fill the graves with members of all the nations that lived in Lithuania.”²⁰ The communiqué on Latvia described the murder of Jews from Riga and Dvinsk.²¹ The commission’s few reports that did refer to the murder of Jews did not change the overall trend of minimizing and silencing that typified the Soviet Union’s attitude.

The war crimes trials held in the Soviet Union against local Nazi collaborators also indicated that understating the Jews as victims of Nazism was official Soviet policy. The first trial was held in Krasnodar July 14–18, 1943. The eleven defendants were Soviet citizens accused of serving in ss Sonderkommando 10A and taking part in the acts of terror and murder perpetrated by this unit. The entire trial was covered by the Soviet press. Nothing was written about the murder of Jews.²² Sonderkommando 10A murdered thousands of Jews in Krasnodar and many other places. The second trial was coined the “Kharkov trial” and took place December 15–18, 1943. The defendants were three Germans and one local collaborator. The murder of thousands of Kharkov Jews in Drobitski-Yar was not mentioned during the course of the trial nor in the press. The victims were described as “peace-loving citizens.”²³

Between October and December 1945 the Soviet press reported on three other war crimes trials relating to the atrocities at Smolensk, Orlov-Briansk-Bobruisk, and Leningrad district. No mention was made of Jews in any of these trials.²⁴ This was part of a deliberate policy on the part of the Soviet leaders.

THE “BLACK BOOK” AFFAIR

The policy by which the Soviet authorities denied the uniqueness of the Jews’ fate in the German-occupied territories was expressed most thoroughly when publication of the “Black Book” was banned. The book’s sub-heading explains its contents: “On the cruel slaughter of Jews as carried out by the Fascist-German occupiers in the (temporarily) occupied territories of the Soviet Union and in the extermination camps in Poland during the years of the war, 1941–1945.” The “Black Book,” which was based on testimonies and documentation, was compiled by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, and its editors were distinguished Jewish writers, Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Gross-

man. The idea for the book was born in 1943, and the first edition was ready for publication immediately after the war. Over several years, the book underwent changes and amendments, in order for it to reach the publishing approval of the Soviet authorities, but this approval was never forthcoming.²⁵ Ehrenburg and Grossman and the heads of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Solomon Mikhoels and Itzik Feffer, approached Andrei Zhdanov, secretary of the Communist Central Committee, on November 1946 with the request to assist in publishing the “Black Book” and to order an allocation of paper on which to print it.²⁶ The request was passed on by Zhdanov to Alexandrov. His response arrived on February 3, 1947. In his letter, Alexandrov pointed out that the book “presents a distorted picture of the real character of fascism,” since the impression it gave was that “the Germans fought against the Soviets only in order to annihilate the Jews.” Alexandrov quoted parts of the book that claimed that, in order to save their lives, the Jews presented themselves as Russians, Ukrainians, etc., and used documents belonging to local inhabitants. In his opinion, this was a falsification of history, since it teaches that the other nations were in a better state. The final reply was that “the propaganda department is convinced that publication of the ‘Black Book’ does not serve its purpose [*nietseleobraznyi*].” On August 20, 1947, an order was issued to stop printing the book. The ban on the “Black Book” was a continuation of Soviet wartime policy, according to which the persecution of the Jewish nation under German occupation was to be concealed.

The Soviet Union followed a deliberate propaganda policy, dictated by Stalin, that was obvious from his very first wartime speech: the Nazi-German aim was to annihilate the Russians and other Slavic people, which was not true, and to hide the fact that Nazi Germany carried out total annihilation only of the Jews and not of any other nation in the occupied territories of Soviet Union.

It is reasonable to assume that German propaganda, to some degree, influenced this Soviet policy. In millions of leaflets distributed along the Soviet front and in the rear area, the German propaganda machine stressed that its war was against “Judeo-Bolshevism” and not against the Russian people and the other nations in the Soviet Union. It was a line of propaganda that fell on fertile ground. Many Soviet civilians and soldiers were tainted by anti-Semitism, and many of them would have been pleased to see the Jews disappear, even if this involved cruelty and murder. To counter this propaganda, the Soviets authorities presented Germany as striving to exterminate the Russians and other Slavic nations, while downplaying the murder of Jews and their singular fate under German occupation. The objective of Soviet propaganda was to increase the Soviet soldiers’

motivation to fight the German enemy and increase the war effort among the Soviet people in the rear area.

In the background of the Soviet policy of veiling the murder of Jews, there was also Stalin's inherent anti-Semitism. The suffering of all the populations that remained under German occupation did not touch Stalin's heart, and the murder of Jews certainly did not. Anything that did not contribute directly to the war effort, to the victory over Nazi Germany, was of no interest to him. This was a man who determined Soviet policy and attitudes toward the Holocaust. Stalin's anti-Semitism was expressed outspokenly in the last years of his life, between 1948 and March 1953, known by the Jews as the "black years." These were the years when the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were executed and there was a new blood libel, coined the "doctors' plot." Stalin's death put an end to a further period of tragedy and danger for the remaining Jews of the Soviet Union, who had just been through the Holocaust.

Notes

1. *Jews in Czarist Russia*

1. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 36, 38; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 45.
2. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 69–70; *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, 30:902. This number includes the Jews of Congressional Poland.
3. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 127–28; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 147–48.
4. Friesel, *Atlas*, 24–25, 30–31.
5. Friesel, *Atlas*, 42–43; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 7–8.
6. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 100; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 82.
7. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 46–48.
8. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 54–55, 105, 119; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 108, 171. Ettinger mentions a flyer issued by the Narodnaia Volia in August 1881, which called on peasants to rise up against the czar, the nobility, and the Jews.
9. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 110–11.
10. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 168; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 168.
11. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 108–9; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 13.
12. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 172; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 114–15.
13. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 173.
14. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 112–13; Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 277.
15. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 264–65.
16. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 174; Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 212, 273, 277–78, 282–48.
17. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 175; Hachohen, *Trials and Blood Libels*, 88, 98.
18. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 124–26; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 231–32, 235–36, 242–46.
19. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 126.
20. Friesel, *Atlas*, 51.
21. Friesel, *Atlas*, 51.
22. Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 189, 197, 220–22, 239.
23. Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 331–35; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 198–99; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 143–44.
24. Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 335, 339, 344–46, 349.
25. Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 140–42.
26. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 143; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 142–43, 143. The Bund had 40,000 members in 1906, as against Lenin's Social Democratic Party's 160,000 members.
27. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 196–97; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 142.
28. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 197.

29. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 130, 194–95, 197; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 364–47; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 143.
30. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 175–76; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 157–58; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 349–50.
31. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 175–76; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 161–62; Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 116–19.
32. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 247–48; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 90.
33. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 32–33.
34. Ostrovski, *Yevreiskie Pogromy*, 31–32; Gusev-orenburgskii, *Kniga o Yevreiskikh Pogromakh*, 35–36.
35. Gusev-orenburgskii, *Kniga o Yevreiskikh Pogromakh*, 16–17, 55–62.
36. Gusev-orenburgskii, *Kniga o Yevreiskikh Pogromakh*, 55–62.
37. Ostrovski, *Yevreiskie Pogromy*, 49–51.
38. Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 184–85; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 106; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 167; Leshchinski, *The Jews in Soviet Russia*, 53. Leshchinski mentions 75,000 who were murdered, 50,000 who were widowed, and around 10,000 children who were orphaned.
39. Gusev-orenburgskii, *Kniga o Yevreiskikh Pogromakh*, 161–62.
40. Pinkas *Hakehillot: Poland*, vol. 2, *Eastern Galicia*, 24.
41. Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 40; Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 149.
42. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 196; Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 415.

2. *Jews in the USSR and Annexed Territories*

1. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 91–92.
2. Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 171.
3. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 249; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 162–63.
4. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 258; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 166.
5. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 210; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 75–77; Baron, *Russian Jew under Tsars*, 176.
6. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 84.
7. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 65–66; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 239–40.
8. Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia*, 534.
9. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 90–93; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 241–43; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 251.
10. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 216, 221–22; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 98–101, 106–10.
11. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 121, 153.
12. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 253; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 199–200.
13. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 167–69, 203.
14. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 203.

15. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 290; Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle, 1865–1965*, 290; Lvavi Ya'akov, *Jewish Colonization in Birobidzhan*, 55–66.
16. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 258; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 174–81.
17. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 225–28.
18. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 237–38; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 203–4; Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 296–99.
19. Sachar, *Course of Modern Jewish History*, 416–17; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 41; Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 202; Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 275–77.
20. Ettinger, *On the History of the Jews in Poland and Russia*, 393.
21. Leshchinski, *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 256. In the 1926 population census, 2,597,400 people admitted to belonging to the Jewish nation (Ashkenazi), of whom 72.6 percent claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue.
22. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 215–18; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 183–84.
23. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 181–82; Leshchinski, *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 264–70; Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 139–40.
24. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 209–11; Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 211–13.
25. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 223–25; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 211–13.
26. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 229–33; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 219.
27. Ettinger, *Jewish People*, 255; Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 138–39; Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 239–41. The area designated for Jewish settlement was located in the northern part of Crimea, which was sparsely populated.
28. Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews*, 192; Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 189, 291.
29. Levin, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, 324.
30. Altschuler, *Distribution of the Jewish Population*, 11, 39–41.
31. Leshchinski, *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 57.
32. Altschuler, *Distribution of the Jewish Population*, 9–11, 18, 21–27, 38–40.
33. Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 38–39.
34. Bronsztejn, *Ludność Żydowska w Polsce*, 277.
35. Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 207–11.
36. Mahler, *History of Jews in Poland*, 89.
37. Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 196–98, 219–21.
38. Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia, 19; Shmuel Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 15.
39. Klausner, *Vilna Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2:376, 431, 436.
40. Klausner, *Vilna Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2:614–16.
41. Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia, 11, 30–31, 244, 366–67.
42. Klausner, *Vilna Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2:224–26; Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 187–88, 189–91; Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia, 19.
43. Klausner, *Vilna Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2:640–50; Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, 240; Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia, 27–28, 243–44, 366; Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 14, 59, 122, 215, 234, 292–93.
44. Jean Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1349 (Hebrew).
45. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: The Jews of Bessarabia*, 411–14 (Hebrew).
46. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: The Jews of Bessarabia*, 368–71.

47. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, 410, 498–502.
48. As a result of the political arrangements following World War I, the Litvaks found themselves residing in four separate states: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and the Soviet Union.
49. *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, 21:770; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 46–47, 49, 457, 658 (Hebrew).
50. Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 220.
51. Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 222–23.
52. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 58–62; Garfunkel, *The Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 14 (Hebrew).
53. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 69–72; Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 232–33.
54. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 75–77; Garfunkel, *The Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 18–19; Greenbaum, *Jews of Lithuania*, 276–80.
55. Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central*, 276–80.
56. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 23.
57. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 20–21, 25.
58. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 18.
59. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 303–4; Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 253–54.
60. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 303–7.

3. German-Soviet Relations and Changes in Eastern Europe

1. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 643–46, 654–55, 661.
2. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 9.
3. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 65, 661.
4. Govrin, *Jewish Factor*, 72. Taken from a quote in *Dokumenty Vneshei Politiki SSSR*, 16:791–93.
5. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, 597–98; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 587; Govrin, *Jewish Factor*, 77.
6. Ehrenburg, *Liudi, Gody, Zhizn*, vol. 2, books 4–5; Read and Fisher, *Deadly Embrace*, 59.
7. *Documents on International Affairs, 1939–1946*, 1:446.
8. *Documents on International Affairs, 1939–1946*, 1:387–88.
9. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, 609–11.
10. Govrin, *Jewish Factor*, 111–12, regarding the nonaggression pact and the secret protocol.
11. Schleunes, “1939, The Making of War and the Final Solution,” 31.
12. Read and Fisher, *Deadly Embrace*, 333, 336.
13. Read and Fisher, *Deadly Embrace*, 351–56; Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, 638–39.
14. Read and Fisher, *Deadly Embrace*, 292–93.
15. *Pravda*, November 1, 1939.
16. Dimitri Volkogonov, *Stalin*, 2:135.
17. *Voenna-Istoricheski Zhurnal* 6 (1940): 69.

4. *Jews in the Soviet Annexed Territories*

1. Pinkas Hakehillot: *Eastern Galicia*, 23; Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 11. This number does not include the 75,000 Jews from Vilnius and part of the province that were annexed to Lithuania. The western part of the province of Bialystock remained—with its inhabitants—under German occupation.

2. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:448; 3:852, 896, 1155.

3. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 170. Ioanid estimates the number of Jews in Bessarabia and north Bucovina at the time of their annexation to the Soviet Union as 279,000.

4. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 44; Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy*, 23, 44; Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 31.

5. Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 36.

6. Pinkas Hakehillot: *Eastern Galicia*, 436.

7. Pinkas Hakehillot: *Romania*, B:300, 433; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 40–41.

8. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Ternopol*, 384.

9. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 188. A Soviet passport did not grant its holder the right to travel freely from place to place, not even within the Soviet Union. In fact, the passport was no more than an identity card.

10. The Eichmann Trial, Testimonies, A:53–54, testimony of Zvi Pakhter.

11. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, 51–52; Govrin, *Jewish Factor*, 123.

12. G. V. Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia Politika Stalina*, 188–89. The emigration offices were headed by Adolf Eichmann.

13. S. V. Stepashin et al., *Organy Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine*, vol. 1, book 1, doc. 53, 118.

14. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 147; Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 206–9.

15. Schneider, *Like a Hunted Animal*, 19–20.

16. Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 217, 278–79.

17. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 24–25.

18. Zerach Warhaftig, *Refugee and Survivor*, 119–21, 125–26, 150–52.

19. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 56–57; Bender, *Facing Death*, 73–77; Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 95.

20. Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 91–92, 203; Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 190–92; Bender, *Facing Death*, 72–73.

21. Altschuler, *The Jews of the Soviet Union in 1939–1953*, 7, 16–17, 23.

22. Altschuler, *The Jews of the Soviet Union in 1939–1953*, 137–40; Bender, *Facing Death*, 87–88.

23. Redlich, “The Jews in the Territories Annexed to the Soviet Union, 1939–1941,” 75.

24. Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 132, 301–2; Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours*, 127–29; Pinchuk, *Soviet Jews in the Face of the Holocaust*, 50. Among those arrested were Henrik Ehrlich and Victor Alter, Bund leaders from Poland. The prominent Zionist leaders to be arrested included Dr. Emil Zommerstein and Professor Moshe Shur, members of the Polish Parliament.

25. Perlis, *Pioneering Zionist Youth Movements*, 82–83; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 73–77.

26. Stepashin et al., *Organy*, vol. 1, book 2, doc. 222, 184–87.
27. Stepashin et al., *Organy*, vol. 1, book 2, doc. 232–34, 248.
28. Lithuanian American Information Center, New York, 1944, 19–21.
29. Stepashin et al., *Organy*, vol. 1, book 1, doc. 81, 168–69.
30. The estimates of 265,000–270,000 Jewish refugees from Poland, who were then in west Belorussia and west Ukraine, out of the 300,000 refugees who came there until the end of 1939, is based on the assumption that 15,000–20,000 of them sought employment inside the Soviet Union, and another 15,000 moved to Lithuania. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1174–75, gives the number of about 200,000 Jews who returned to Poland after the war. Taking into account those Polish Jews who died in Soviet Union in Soviet camps or of hunger and diseases outside the camps, fell as soldiers on the front, or left the Soviet Union (among them 6,000 with the Polish Anders Army), the estimates given above are close to the reality.
31. Levin, *A Period in Parenthesis*, 306–8. The number of the deported given there is an overestimate. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:303, 436.

5. Preparations in Germany for the Attack

1. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, 114; Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, 676.
2. Nuremberg Documents PS-446; Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, 681.
3. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, 150–51.
4. Nuremberg Documents NOKW-2302. OKH was the headquarters for the German land forces.
5. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 127–28, 130; Browning, *Origins*, 223.
6. Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 136–37; Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, 158–60.
7. Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 138; Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 187. A copy of the final text of the agreement is not available, and according to Hilberg its terms derive mainly from the affidavits by ss Obergruppenführer Walter Schellenberg and Commander of Einsatzgruppe D, ss Standartenführer Otto Ohlendorf.
8. Browning, *Origins*, 217.
9. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, 160–61; Browning, *Origins*, 218.
10. Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in der UdSSR*, 64–66.
11. Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in der UdSSR*, 53–54.
12. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-484.
13. Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 129.
14. Förster, “Jewish Policies of the German Military,” 59.
15. Herbert, “Extermination Policy,” 26.
16. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 188.
17. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 186–87. Jäger's testimony was given on June 15, 1959, in prison.
18. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 218; Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 47–51.

19. Browning, *Origins*, 226–27. The EG officers who supported Ohlendorf’s testimony that the order to kill all the Jews was given before the invasion were Walter Blume, Paul Blobel, Martin Sandberger, Gustav Nosske and deputy commander of SK 7b Waldemar Klingelhofer. The officers who claimed that the order was given after the invasion were the commander of EG C, Otto Rasch, and the commander of EK 5, Erwin Schultz. Some of the indicted claimed that the order in Pretsch was given by Heydrich.

20. Streim, *Die Behandlung Sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener*, 80–83; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 312–14.

21. Yad Vashem Archives 0–4/53–1 (henceforth YVA).

22. YVA, TR-10/934.

23. Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 37–43. “Operational Situation Report—USSR” no. 1 was published on the day after the invasion of the Soviet Union, June 23, 1941. These daily reports were published up to April 24, 1942, the last of them being no. 195. The weekly “Reports from the Occupied Eastern Territories” first appeared on May 1, 1942, and the last one was numbered 55 and dated May 1943.

24. Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 105; Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 138–39. The HSSPFs, who were directly subordinated to Himmler, allowed him better control over the field activity of the various branches of the SS and ensured tighter cooperation among them.

25. Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 6–7, 10; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 305–10.

26. Browning, *Origins*, 230; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 310; Büchler, “The Part Played by Waffen SS Brigades in the Murder of Soviet Jews until 1941,” 42. See Förster, “Das nationalsozialistische Herrschaftssystem und der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion,” 38.

27. Schulte, *The German Army*, 53–61; Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 95–98.

28. About the directives concerning the Jews, see chap. 9.

29. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-2302; Warlimont, *Inside Hitler’s Headquarters*, 153.

30. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1020.

31. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 107–11.

32. Nuremberg Documents PS-1058.

33. Nuremberg Documents PS-2718; Schulte, *The German Army*, 86–90.

34. Müller, *Wehrmacht und Okkupation*, 55–56. Schulte, *The German Army*, 87, writes: “The Reichsernährungsministerium (Reich Food Ministry) had based calculations for improving the standard of living inside Germany on the premise that the 5 million members of the Wehrmacht (a group with the highest food requirements) could be excluded from the total Reich calculations.”

35. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 47–52.

36. Schulte, *The German Army*, 90.

37. Müller, *Wehrmacht und Okkupation*, 58, 93–95.

38. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 315–16.

6. Invasion under Slogan “War on Judeo-Bolshevism”

1. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 111.

2. Stepashin, *Organy*, vol. 1, docs. 49, 103, 107, 110, 111, 115, 118, 122, 128, 132, 134.

3. Kirian et al., *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina Sovetskovo Soyuza, 1941–1945*, 12, 15.

4. I. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soyuza*, 20, 27.
5. Krivosheyev, *Grif Sekretnosti Sniat*, 141–43.
6. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 108.
7. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 55.
8. Institut Istorii SSSR, AN Dokumenty i Materialy, Inv. 148, 19–23, 26, 27.
9. Iinytskyi, *Deutschland und die Ukraine*, 2:12157–59.
10. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 62–63.
11. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 69, 101.
12. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, Mogilv file, RG-53002-M, reel 5 (henceforth, USHMM).
13. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 61; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 34–35.
14. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 92–93.
15. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 160–64, 183–85, 199–201, 208. This change in propaganda tactics took place in the spring and summer of 1942.
16. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RH-23/26 (henceforth BA-MA). The pamphlet was not published until early 1942.
17. Semiryaga explains that Soviet soldiers became prisoners of war for many reasons: lack of weapons, an obscure situation and confusion in complicated battle conditions, the fear of responsibility for defeat in front of their commanders, fear of death in battle, and rejection of the Soviet regime.” M. I. Semiryaga, “Voennoplennye, Kollaboratsionisty, i General Vlasov,” 313.
18. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 34, writes that at the beginning of the war, “In the Zhytomyr region Red Army deserters approached the Germans with this leaflet asking for more passes for their comrades. According to German intelligence reports, the anti-Semitic content of the leaflet was especially ‘effective.’”
19. Testimony of Avraham Wein, YVA, 03/4822, 9–11.
20. Aizenshtat et al., *Kniga Zhivikh*, 235, 345.
21. Deutscher, *Stalin*, 590.

7. *Evacuation of Soviet Population*

1. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina v Gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny*, 1:251–52.
2. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:253–54.
3. Kovalev, *Eshelony Idut na Vostok, Iz Istorii Preobrazovania Proizvoditelnykh Sil SSSR v 1941–1942*, 10; *Istoria Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny Sovetskogo Soyuza*, 2:546–47. Within a few months, 300,000 children and 100,000 adults had been evacuated from Leningrad and 1.4 million from Moscow, of whom one-third were children.
4. *Istoria Velikoi*, 2:143.
5. *Istoria Velikoi*, 2:147–48.
6. *Sovetski Tyl v Pervyi Period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny, Sbornik Dokumentov*, 139.
7. Stepashin et al., *Organy*, vol. 1, book 1, doc. 54, 119–22; report of the NKVD, November 9, 1939, with a description of anti-Jewish persecution in occupied Poland. Up to June 1941, the Soviets continued to receive information on the persecution of Jews in Poland.

8. Anatoli (Kuznetsov), *Babi Yar*, 103.
9. Altschuler, "The Evacuation and Escape of Jews from Belarussia during the Holocaust (June–August, 1941)," 132–33. Altschuler distributed a questionnaire containing the question, "Did members of your family stay behind under occupation? And if so, why?" He wrote that 13.6 percent of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union replied that they had had a positive estimation of the Germans.
10. Testimony of Sergei Belov, in Aizenshtat et al., *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 194.
11. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 46.
12. These numbers are assessments, rounded upward or downward.
13. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 47; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 82.
14. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 49–50. Spector supplied a table consisting of the twenty main cities and towns in Volhynia, together with an evaluation of the number of evacuees and escapees from them.
15. This number also includes Jews from the area surrounding Vilnius who had been citizens of Poland until the war. See David Engel, "The Jewish Issue in Poland during the Holocaust," 512.
16. This was the fate of the 355,000 to 390,000 Polish Jews who resided in the Soviet Union during and after the war:
 - a. Some 250,000 left the Soviet Union, of whom 244,000 returned to Poland in accordance with repatriation agreements between Poland and the Soviet Union, and 6,000 left the Soviet Union with the General Anders Army and made their way to Iran and onward from there. See Litvak, *Polish-Jewish Refugees*, 246, 358; Engel, "The Jewish Issue," 513.
 - b. Reportedly 70,000 to 100,000 remained in Soviet Union and returned to west Belorussia, west Ukraine, and Vilnius.
 - c. Tens of thousands perished inside Soviet Union from hunger, disease, and combat in the ranks of Polish and Soviet army.
17. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 82, which assessed the number of Jews to escape Lithuania as 15,000, including the Vilnius area; 65,000 to 68,000 Jews remained in the Vilnius area during the German occupation.
18. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 32.
19. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 311.
20. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:307–10; Solomon Shapira, *On the Ways of Expulsion*, 28–30. The estimation of the numbers of Jews who resided in Bessarabia at the time of the German-Romanian invasion took into consideration the 8,000 Jews who had been expelled to the Soviet Union during the first half of June 1941, as well as 35,000 Jews from the Hotin province, which in August 1940 was annexed by the Soviets to north Bukovina.
21. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:440; Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 52. An estimate of the number of Jews in north Bukovina at the time of the German-Romanian invasion takes into account the 5,000 Jews who were expelled in June 1941 to the Soviet Union. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 172, writes that the mayor of Chernovits estimated the number of Jews in north Bukovina at the time of the German-Romanian invasion, according to the Romanian army's estimate, as being 65,000–70,000.

22. These statistics are based on research done by Mordechai Altshuler, "Evacuation and Escape," 147–49. This research focuses only on east Belorussia, but the percentage of those mobilized among the Jewish population in east Ukraine and the Russian Federative Republic was similar to that of east Belorussia.

23. E. G. Joffe, *Stranitsy Istorii Yevreev Belorusii*, 109–10.

24. Altshuler, "Evacuation and Escape," 140; Shalom Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 49. In the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1577, it is mentioned that 16,000 people lived in the Vitebsk ghetto, which gives the estimation that 22,000 Jews escaped or were evacuated.

25. Aizenshtat et al., *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 103–4; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 48.

26. Testimony of Aharon Gorfinkel, YVA, 03/4658.

27. Testimony of Ya'akov Genin, YVA, 03/4676.

28. Testimony of Lydia Kleiman, YVA, 3512/302.

29. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1733–1734; Y. Arad, S. Krakowski, and S. Spector, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 37, 55. According to the report, most of the Jews of Zhitomir escaped, and of the 30,000 inhabitants, the Einsatzgruppen found only 5,000. It is feasible that thousands of Jews did not register themselves as such in the census conducted by the Germans.

30. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:780–81. See also Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 80, 129: "In Kamenets-Podolsky 23,000 Jews were shot in three days by a Kommando of the Higher ss and Police Leader." This number includes the 14,000 Jews who had been expelled there from Hungary; the remaining 9,000–10,000 Jews were inhabitants of the town who stayed there under German occupation.

31. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 13–14.

32. See chap. 11 on the number of Jews murdered in Vinitza in the various actions.

33. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 119, 196, according to which 8,000 Jews remained in occupied Uman, which is the basis for the estimate that 6,000 escaped or were evacuated.

34. Testimony of Anna Shalapovarsky, YVA, S-1946/174.

35. YVA, 33/605. All the Jews of Smolensk, 2,000 in number, were imprisoned in the ghetto that was established in August 1941.

36. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:289.

37. Testimony of Ida Pinkart, YVA, P-209/117, 3–8.

38. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:133.

39. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 135, 242: "Of approximately 100,000 Jews originally living in Dnepropetrovsk, about 70,000 escaped before the German troops entered the town."

40. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 89, 142. In Kherson, 5,000 Jews remained. Tsen-tranyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rosii, Fond 4, Opis 4021, Delo 177, 301. This document mentions that 7,000 Jews were murdered in Kherson.

41. Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 231.

42. Testimony of Basia Shkolnik-Kagan, YVA, S-3524/314, 2–4.

43. Testimony of Basia Shkolnik-Kagan, YVA, M-33/43.

44. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 81, 131.

45. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 90, 145.

46. See Spector, "The Fate of the Jews of Soviet Ukraine (in the 1939 Borders) during the Nazi Invasion," 63, which contains a statistical table of Jews murdered in various towns.

47. Altschuler, "Evacuation and Escape," 150, 157, says the number of evacuees was as high as 77.4 percent.

48. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 128, 218–18; 173, 299–300. This report deals with a period in which the actions for the total annihilation of Jews in these specific places had ceased several months previously.

49. Testimony of Ya'akov Maniovich, YVA, M-3421/188, 2.

50. Borovoi, "The Annihilation of the Odessa Jewish Population during the Fascist Occupation," 91.

51. The estimate of the number of Jews evacuated from Kharkov is based mainly on the number of Jews who were left behind and murdered in the city. See chap. 12.

52. A conference of Jews was held in Moscow on August 24, 1941, with the participation of writers, poets, actors, and scientists. An announcement was made calling on the Jewish world to support the Soviet Union in the war against the Germans. The announcement, which also mentioned Hitler's murderous plan to annihilate the Jews, was published in the Soviet press and thus reached many of the local Jews.

53. Testimony of Avraham Greenberg, YVA, G-3335/246, 11.

54. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 146, 258.

55. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 262; see also 184, 318, where mention is made of the execution of more captured Jews, but not of numbers.

56. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 145, 256.

57. According to Ya'akov Leshchinski, *The Jewish Diaspora after the War*, 134, about 10 percent of the Jews did not register in the census as Jews.

58. Joffe, *Stranitsy Istorii*, 112.

59. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20. About the attitude of the local population, see chap. 32.

60. Memoirs of G. B. Reshetin, *Moskva Voennaia: Memuary I Arkhivnye Dokumenty*, Moscow, 1995, 111–12.

61. *Moskva Voennaia*, 116–18.

8. Anti-Jewish Pogroms during Early Days

1. There were pogroms in the Bialystok area. The best known occurred in the town of Jedwabne, instigated by the local Polish population, on July 6–7, 1941. According to Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, almost all of the 1,500 Jews in Jedwabne were murdered. Jedwabne, which is located northwest of Bialystok, was part of west Belorussia (Soviet Union) from the second half of September 1939 until the end of June 1941. Now Jedwabne is part of Poland.

2. Helmut Krausnick, *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen*, 145.

3. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 201, 472. Over two days, the towns of Zbarazh and Kolomyja had no government and the Ukrainians perpetrated anti-Jewish riots. See Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 108, regarding anti-Jewish disturbances in the town and township Liubieshov.

4. *Postanovi 2 Velikogo Zboru OUN*, 14; Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy*, 175–76.
5. Weiss, “Otnoshenie Niekotorych Krugov Ukrainskovo Nacionalogo Dvizhenia k Yevreiam,” 107.
6. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 114–21.
7. Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 18–23.
8. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:929; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 86–87. Fifty-three Polish professors from Lvov’s university were murdered during the first days of German occupation.
9. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 96, 168, 204, 222, 245, 355, 390. Towns in which pogroms took place and the number of victims: Zolochew, 3,000 to 4,000; Zborov, 1,000; Ternopol, 5,000; Drohobych, 400; Sokal, 400; Borislav, 300; Sambor, 150. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 73, 93, 103, 124. Towns in which pogroms took place: Lutsk, 300; Tuchin, 70; Lanowtsy, 60.
10. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*: Sambor, 345; Stryj, 390; Kulikov, 476; Peremishlani, 442; Grimailov, 139–40; Khorostkov, 230. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 65–67, writes that 30 Jewish inhabitants of the village of Vitkovitchy were murdered and 60 Jews in the village of Horyngrad-Krupa.
11. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 24, 29–33.
12. Petlyura was murdered in Paris in 1926 by a young Jew, Shalom Schwartzbard, in retaliation for the murder of his own family in the 1918–20 pogroms in the Ukraine by Petlyura’s soldiers. At his trial in France, which caused waves internationally, Schwartzbard was acquitted.
13. Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 62–63; David Kahana, *Ghetto Lvov Diary*, 34. According to other sources, the number of dead reached 2,000.
14. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 7, 77, 369, 472, 484; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:813.
15. Hungary annexed the Transcarpathian Ukraine (south Slovakia) region on March 15, 1939, in the wake of Germany’s occupation of Czechoslovakia. The annexation was carried out by force, against the wishes of the local Ukrainians, who were the majority of the population and had announced their independence.
16. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 66, 112: “Members of the Tenth Hungarian Hunter Battalion have expelled more than 1,000 Hungarian Jews over the Dniester to Galicia. . . . Members of the same Hungarian unit tore down Ukrainian flags, threw stones into the windows of Ukrainian priests.” On July 12, 1941, a secret Hungarian plan was prepared for the expulsion of Jews from Poland and Transcarpathian Ukraine to regions in the Ukraine under Hungarian military control.
17. Rozauskas, Baranauskas, Ruksenas, *Documents Accuse*, 123–24.
18. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 124.
19. These tendencies on the part of the Lithuanians for a measure of independence contradicted Nazi Germany’s policies. The Nazis dissolved the provisional Lithuanian government and forbade Skirpa to return to Lithuania.
20. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 91.
21. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 30–31.

22. Sherman, *From My Parents' Home to My Homeland*, 22–23.
23. Nuremberg Documents, L-180, 21–23.
24. USHMMA, Riga, R-70-5-7, reel 4, a letter that was sent to the Generalkommissar of Latvia on August 12, 1941.
25. Ancel, “The Romanian Way of Solving the ‘Jewish Problem’ in Bessarabia and Bukovina,” 197–98.
26. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 45, 68.
27. Rubenstein and Altman, *The Unknown Black Book*, 213.

9. German Administration in the Occupied Territories

1. USHMMA, LCVORA, Fond R-70, Opis 5, folder 48, chap. 5-N.
2. USHMMA, Verwaltungs-Anordnungen Nr. 2, RG-53002M, reel 4.
3. Förster, “Jewish Policies of the German Military,” 59.
4. *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, 38:86–94.
5. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 123–33; Child, “The Ukraine under German Occupation,” 635–37.
6. But at that stage Hitler decided that instead of further advancing toward Moscow, he would send one of his two armored armies, Guderians, south for a large encircling operation around Kiev in Ukraine, and the second, Hoths, to the north to aid the attack on Leningrad. The advance toward Moscow was renewed only in late September and early October 1941. The two wasted months of the summer proved fatal to the prospects of reaching Moscow. The early winter, the poor roads, mud and snow, and fresh Soviet forces stopped the German advance about 30 kilometers from the city. The decision to turn the armored forces toward Kiev and Leningrad became a big military mistake.
7. *Hakenkreuz*, 164–66. Due to confusion with regard to authority of the Higher ss and Police Leaders, Himmler and Rosenberg issued a document on November 19, 1941, signed by both of them, saying, “The Higher ss and Police Leaders are personally and directly subordinated to the Reichskommissar and not to anyone else in the civil administration.”
8. See chap. 28.
9. Bubenschchikov et al., *Prestupnye*, 60–61.
10. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 91, 121.
11. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 91; Nuremberg Documents, PS-197.
12. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 85n3, 91.
13. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 189n3. Dallin writes about the reason for this earlier transfer of responsibility, before the order of Hitler: “Apparently the Army was anxious to extricate itself from the problems of dealing with the local political groups and preferred to shift the responsibility to the Ostministerium, which, however, had not yet formally been organized.” Nuremberg Documents, PS-1042, PS-1043.
14. Trial of Gewecke, Gebietskommissar of Siauliai in Lithuania, YVA, 04/20-66-2, 40; Nuremberg Documents, PS-1138.
15. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 100–105.
16. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 144–46.

17. Garfunkel, *Lithuanian Jewry*, 4:54–55. Attorney Y. Goldberg, a former officer in the Lithuanian army, appealed to his former friend, Yonas Matuliunas, a minister in the provisional Lithuanian government, to stop the pogroms, but nothing was done.
18. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 122–25.
19. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 217.
20. Dean, *Collaboration*, 107.
21. Collection from the Latvian National Archives, folder 5, Latvijas PSR Centralais Valsts Octobra Revolucijas Arhives, Fond R-70, Opis 5, folder 48, chap. 4–3A.
22. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 50–51.
23. Document issued by the 383rd Infantry Division, YVA, M-33/544.
24. Browning, *Origins*, 275.
25. YVA, 051/310. The document is taken from BA-MA.
26. Schulte, *German Army*, 67–68; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 50.
27. USHMM, RG-53, 005 M, reel 2m, UC. The material comes from the district archive of the town of Gomel. See Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik*, 59.
28. Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik*, 59.
29. The Special State Archive in Moscow, Osobii Archive, Fond 1323, Opis 1, Delo 50, 10.
30. Schulte, *German Army*, 67–68; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 50.
31. About the conditions in the prisoners of war camps, see chap. 28.
32. Himmler's order dated January 19, 1942, Lithuanian State Archive (Centrinis Valstybinis Archyvas), Fond R-689, Opis 1, Delo 274, 34.
33. Trial of Karl Dietrich in Dortmund, Germany, January 16, 1963.
34. Natsionalnyi Archiv Republiki Belorussia, Fond 370, box 1, file 1 262, 147–58 (State Archive in Minsk).
35. Dean, *Collaboration*, 73.
36. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 137–38; Dean, *Collaboration*, 73.
37. For activity and participation by the indigenous police forces in the persecution and murder of Jews, see chap.s 11–14, 16, and 17.
38. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1138.
39. See Latvijas PSR Centralais Valsts Arhives, no. P-1026, Opis 1, Delo 3–239, 1.
40. YVA, M-37/1136.
41. YVA, M-37/1136, the “brown file.”
42. Keitel wrote in early August 1941 that Hitler believed that the Red Army was already defeated and had ordered the military industries to direct their main efforts from the supply of armaments for the land forces, to supplying goods to the navy and air force, in their war against Britain. See Gorlitz, *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Keitel*, 145.
43. Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik und Kriegsführung*, 131.
44. Nuremberg Documents, PS-702, 35–36.
45. Eichmann Trial, file 349, Israel Police Force.
46. About the Wannsee conference, see Browning, *Origins*, 410–16. The Wannsee Conference was postponed from December 9, 1941, until January 20, 1942, as the result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 and the December 11 German declaration of war against the United States.

47. YVA, 04/53/1. The letter was signed by ss-Sturmbanführer Rudolf Bilfinger.
48. Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik*, 60. Müller quotes an order dated August 20, 1941, from the 454 Security Division, which was active in central Ukraine and to whom the local military administration was subordinated.
49. For more on policies regarding mixed-race families and their children and people who were half-Jewish in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, see chap. 27.
50. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 94–95; Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 131, 133–34, 142–43; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 123–24.
51. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews* 79–80.
52. Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 49.
53. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *Black Book*, 146, regarding Minsk; Aizenshtat, *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 104, regarding Bobruisk.
54. BA-MA, RH 23/223.
55. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *Black Book*, 28, 67, 71, 279.
56. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 81.
57. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:313.
58. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3363.
59. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 58–59; Kruk, *Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 52–55.
60. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 35–36, 47–48; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 45–46.
61. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 106–8; Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 34–35.
62. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 149–52; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 121.
63. Shapiro, “The Jews of Kishiniev,” 145–46.
64. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:510.
65. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 114; Hersch Smolar, *Soviet Jews behind the Ghetto Barriers*, 33.
66. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *Black Book*, 71, 263, 279.
67. Liakhovitski, *Perezhivshie Katastrofu*, 136.
68. On ways of carrying out the “contribution,” see chap. 30.
69. YVA, M-04/53/1.
70. The document is in the possession of the author and has no archival categorization. Its source is BA-MA.
71. Order No. 2, issued on July 13, 1941, by General Schenckendorff, commander of the rear area in the Army Group Center, states, “Alongside certain roads, [one can still see] bodies of Red Army soldiers and animals rolling about. It is necessary, for sanitary reasons, to bury the corpses. . . . The local governors can impose this work on the Jews.”
72. Nuremberg Documents PS-3363.

10. *Einsatzgruppen Advance and Method of Extermination*

1. Details of advance routes and deployment are based on Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*; Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 173–205; Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 37–38.

2. Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 149–50.
3. Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 179.
4. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 372.
5. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 372; Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 180–81.
6. Browning, *Origins*, 283–84.
7. Gerlach, “German Economic Interests,” 220.
8. Judgment at the trial of Filbert and others from Einsatzkommando 9, YVA, TR-10/934. According to Pohl, “In the case of Heinrich Himmler, it was not until August 1941 that he issued a directive to the Higher ss and Police Leaders in the Soviet Union to murder all Jews irrespective of gender and age.” Pohl, “Hans Krüger,” 244.
9. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 77.
10. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 375, writes that, in order to increase the number of executed Jews, Nebe ordered EK commanders Otto Brandisch and Albert Filbert to murder women and children and that Himmler agreed to that during his visit in Minsk.
11. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 72.
12. About the days of his visit, see Witte et al., *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmler*, 186, 188–89, 192–96. The August 12 meeting with Jeckeln is missing there.
13. Dieckmann, “The War and the Killing of the Lithuanian Jews,” 253–60.
14. Gerlach, “German Economic Interests,” 227.
15. Dieckmann, “The War and the Killing of the Lithuanian Jews,” 265–66.
16. In his mention of Hitler’s “prophecy,” Goebbels was referring to the speech at the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, in which Hitler said that if there were a world war, “the result would not be the Bolshevization of the world, accompanied by a victory for the Jews, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.”
17. For Heydrich’s July 2, 1941, directions to the Higher ss and Police Leaders, see chap. 6.
18. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 192–93. Hilberg wrote that these units murdered 17,887 people. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 26, 36, 92, 112.
19. On the army’s role in carrying out acts of murder against the Jews, see chap. 15.
20. Jäger Report, YVA, 018–245.
21. Testimony of Eberl at the trial in Bavaria (Bayerisches Landescriminalamt) on October 30, 1961, YVA, TR/-1237, 2–4.
22. Klee, Dressen, and Reiss, “*Schöne Zeiten*,” 114–15. General Schniewindt was deputy commander of Corps 9.
23. Klee et al., “*Schöne Zeiten*,” 106–8, 122–29.
24. Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 565.
25. Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, 85. Fleming writes about complaints that passed through the Abwehr and reached its head, Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, and it was he who approached Hitler on the subject and warned of the consequences of such methods. Hitler replied, “You are getting soft. I have to do it, because after me no one else will.”
26. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-541.
27. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 218.
28. Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 182; Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 219;

Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, 200. Hilberg and Reitlinger stress that the source of this conversation is von dem Bach-Zelewski.

29. Operation Euthanasia, which meant death from compassion, had been carried on in the Third Reich between summer 1939 and August 1941, in the course of which more than 70,000 mental patients were put to death with the aid of gas. Institutions using euthanasia were equipped with gas chambers, and there were crematoria in which the corpses were then burned. Operation Euthanasia was under the direct orders of Hitler's Chancellery. See Kogon, Langbein, and Rückerl, *Nazi Mass Murder*, chap. 3, "Euthanasia."

30. Browning, *Origins*, 188–89.

31. Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Stuttgart, JS 328/60, August 28, 1962, Widman's trial, 45–46.

32. Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Stuttgart, JS 328/60, August 28, 1962, Widman's trial, 47; Browning, *Origins*, 354–57.

33. Kogon et al., *Nazi Mass Murder*, 53–54.

34. Kogon et al., *Nazi Mass Murder*, 57, 60, 64, 71–72.

35. Nuremberg Documents, PS-501.

36. Nuremberg Documents, NO-365.

37. Christian Gerlach, "Die Wannsee-Konferenz, das Schicksal der deutschen Juden und Hitlers politische Grundsatzentscheidung, alle Juden Europas zu ermorden," 22. According to Gerlach, in his speech to the Nazi party leadership on December 12, 1941, the day after Germany's declaration of war on the United States, Hitler "hinted" that this was a world war caused by the Jews and that the time was ripe to put into operation his January 30, 1939, prophecy, according to which the world war would end with the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.

38. Nuremberg Documents, NG-2586-G, minutes of Wannsee Conference.

11. Reichskommissariat Ostland

1. Stahlecker Report, Nuremberg Documents, L-180, 30.

2. Jäger Report, YVA, O/18–245, 1–2.

3. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 77; Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Shavli*, 31.

4. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 20–21.

5. Jäger Report, 1. According to the report, dozens more Jews were shot at Seventh Fort on July 9 and 19; see also Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 32–34. According to Avraham Tory, around 6,000 Jews were murdered in Seventh Fort over a period of ten to twelve days. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 49–50.

6. Jäger Report, 7.

7. Jäger Report, 1–3; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 464–65.

8. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 38–39; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 45–46; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 19, 17–18. This report, dated July 11, 1941, deals with the meeting between Stahlecker and the Jewish representatives and the establishment of a ghetto.

9. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 46–48; Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 40–42.

10. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 133–35; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 489–91.

11. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 50.
12. Garfunkel, *Destruction*, 50–52; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 51–52.
13. Garfunkel, *Destruction*, 56–57.
14. Jäger Report, 2.
15. Garfunkel, *Destruction*, 52. This number is based on a population census conducted by the Jewish Council in September 1941.
16. Garfunkel, *Destruction*, 68–70; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 55–59.
17. Garfunkel, *Destruction*, 71–77; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 63–70; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 547–48; Bubnys, “Lithuanian Police Battalions,” 13.
18. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 548.
19. According to the Jäger Report, 5, between August 12, the day on which Einsatzkommando 3 received responsibility for Vilnius, and September 1, 425 Jews and 19 Jewesses were murdered in that city.
20. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 38. Dworzecki includes a photograph of the announcement. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 102–3.
21. The pits had been dug by the Soviet administration, as part of plans to build giant oil reservoirs in the area.
22. Jäger Report, 5.
23. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 104–5.
24. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 218–19. Rozauskas quotes the testimony of Franz Mürer, the man in charge of Jewish matters in Gebietskommissariat Vilnius, according to whom between 40,000 and 42,000 Jews were brought into the ghettos.
25. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 217–18.
26. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 48; Jäger Report, 66–67.
27. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 130.
28. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 139–42.
29. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 149–57.
30. Bubnys, “Lithuanian Police Battalions,” 22.
31. Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Sha’eli*, 32–38; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 177–78, 310–12, 370, 669.
32. Commander of the Tilsit unit was Sturmabführer Hans Bohme. According to Bubenschchikov et al., *Prestupnye*, 85–86, which includes the July 1, 1941, report on this unit, between June 24 and 27, the unit murdered 526 Jews. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 16, states that in early July the Tilsit unit exterminated 1,743 people, most of them Jews. Bubnys, “The Holocaust in Lithuania,” 207, says that the number of Jews killed by this unit was 5,502.
33. Dieckmann, “The War and the Killing of the Lithuanian Jews,” 242–44.
34. Garfunkel, *Lithuanian Jewry*, 4:269–71, 287–88, 292, 296, 327. Hundreds of men from this border area were sent to work in eastern Prussia. They were detained there until July 1943, then sent to Auschwitz.
35. Jäger Report, 7.
36. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 155.
37. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 275; Sherman, *From My Parents’ Home to My Homeland*, 35.

38. YVA, o/18–154, 2.
39. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 278; A. Kadikis, *My Obviniaem*, 76. A report by the Generalkommissar of Latvia points out that in Riga there were 29,602 Jews, 6,143 men, and 9,507 women ages 14–65 fit for work.
40. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 278–82. On the Jews who had been expelled from the Reich to Ostland, see chap. 29.
41. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 100; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:410. The Jews who were brought to the Daugavpils ghetto came from the townships of Griva, Kraslava, Preili, Viski, and Livani.
42. Jäger Report, 5; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 101–2.
43. Kadikis, *My Obviniaem*, 78, summary report of Einsatzkommando 2, from early 1942.
44. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 183; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:875.
45. Kadikis, *My Obviniaem*, 77–78.
46. Tamm, *Nemetsko-Fashistskaia Okkupatsia v Estonii*, 89–91.
47. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 111, 183–84.
48. Kruus, *People, Be Watchful!* 49–50, 105–6; Tamm, *Nemetsko-Fashistskaia Okkupatsia v Estonii*, 79. Report of the Estonian Security Police in the Tallin region, dated December 31, 1941, according to which 610 Jews had been executed so far.
49. M. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 42–43.
50. Nuremberg Documents, NG-2586. On the fate of the Jews of Estonia during the first months of the German occupation, see Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 313–14, 339, 358–59.
51. Bender, *Facing Death*, 105–11.
52. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1363; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 32, 45–46.
53. Schoenberger and Schoenberger, *Zeugen sagen aus*, 135–56.
54. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:147; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 27, 37, 45; Stein, *The Book of Baranovich*, 517–18.
55. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1072. Jews were brought to the ghetto from Ivenets, Naliboki, Korelichi and Lobcha.
56. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:868.
57. Kalman Perver and Yosef Ze'evi, *Memorial Book to the Community of the District of Vileika*, 94–97; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 27, 29.
58. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20, 20.
59. Bubenschchikov et al., *Prestupnye*, 159–60. The author of the report is Dorsch, who visited the camp in order to select workers for Todt Organization. According to Dorsch, the inmates were males ages 15–50.
60. The Jews constituted some 30 percent of the city's population. Assuming that the percentage of Jewish men evacuated or escaped from the city was greater than that among the rest of the population, the number of Jews to be arrested did not exceed 25 percent.
61. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 144, the testimony of Grechanik, who survived Drozdy and later joined the partisans.

62. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 21, 22, 32, 46. Report number 21 is dated July 13, and focuses on the executions of July 8–10. The Jewish intelligentsia were executed on the eighteenth day of their stay in the camp, around July 20. According to report number 32, dated July 24, “In Minsk the entire Jewish intelligentsia has been liquidated (teachers, professors, lawyers, etc., except medical personnel).”

63. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 147–48; Institut Istorii Partii pri TSKKPB, Fond 12, Opis 1, 2–3. Memoirs of a Jewish partisan from Minsk, Anna Matsiz, written in the forest in December, 1943.

64. Belorussian State Archive (Belorusskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv), Fond 359, Opis 1 Doc 8. The original is in German and Byelorussian. The “Chervontsy” was a Soviet bank note worth ten rubles or one German mark.

65. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 35; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 96, writes that the postponement involved the payment of a bribe to the administration’s personnel.

66. Of Minsk’s 72,000 Jews, less than 68,000 remained under occupation; the others escaped, were evacuated, or were mobilized into the army. At least 3,000 to 4,000 Jews were murdered in Drozdy and in Minsk and never reached the ghetto. Several thousand Jewish refugees from west Belorussia and others brought in from neighboring townships swelled the ghetto population to around 70,000.

67. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 67, 118; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 149.

68. Battalion 322 war log entries for August 31 and September 1, 1941, 82–83. The battalion was under the command of Police Regiment Center. The war log is located in the Czech Military History Archives, Vojensky Historicky Archiv, A-2-1-3.

69. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 73, 123; 92, 152–53.

70. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 61–62.

71. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 63; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 151–54.

72. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 120; Bubnys, “Lithuanian Police Battalions,” 15–16.

73. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 65–66; Memoirs of the woman partisan, Matsiz, Institut Istorii Partii pri TSKKPB, Fond 12, Opis 1, 9; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 155.

74. YVA, TR-10/593. On the German Jews in the Minsk ghetto, see chap. 29.

75. Greenstein, *Survivor from Jubilee Square*, 19, 23, 32–33; YVA, 2949/218, the testimony of Bella Greenstein, 5–8. In early 1939 Uzda had a Jewish population of 1,142. This increased at the end of 1939 and during 1940, with the arrival of refugees from the German-occupied regions of Poland.

76. Document in the author’s possession.

77. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1104.

78. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1104.

79. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 270.

80. Nahmani and Hinof, *Pinkas Slutsk*, 143–44; YVA, 03/6914.

81. Archives of the Internal Ministry of the Soviet Republic of Latvia, Fond 1211, Delo 3, List 1; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 155, 278. According to the report in Generalkommissariat Belorussia, 135,000 Jews remained in early 1942, and Einsatzgruppe A (alone) murdered 33,210 Jews there.

82. Nuremberg Documents, L-180, 46.
83. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 155, 276–77.
84. Nememtsko-Fashistskii Okkupatsionnii Rezhim v Belorusii, 53–54.
85. Nuremberg Documents, PS-2273.
86. Testimony of Gustav Hermann, September 6, 1946, YVA, M-1/E-6; trial of Franz Mürer, YVA, 04/20-9-1, 9. It says there that Lohse and Gewecke took action to keep the Jewish artisans and their families alive. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 165–66.
87. Kadikis, *My Obviniaem*, 182–83.
88. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3663(1).
89. YVA, 165-0/18. This correspondence from the army was probably triggered by the Day of Atonement action on October 1, 1941, when many Jews, holders of Sheinen and employed by the military, were caught and murdered in Ponary (Panerai).
90. YVA, 157-0/18.
91. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3663(2).
92. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3663(2).
93. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3664.
94. YVA, 245-0/18.
95. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 105, 134–35; *Encyclopedia of the Diaspora: Grodno*, 525–26.
96. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 304.
97. Committee of Ex-Volkovysk Inhabitants, *The Destruction of Volkovysk in the Second World War*, 16–17.
98. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 135–36.

12. Reichskommissariat Ukraine

1. Kohl, *Ich wundere mich das ich noch lebe*, 190–91; Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 236–37; *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Brest-Litovsk*, 530–31.
2. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 58, 94. The reports appears to focus on one of the actions that took place between August 4 and 7, 1941. Some of the victims were murdered by Einsatzgruppen and some by solders of the ss Cavalry regiment. See Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 294–96.
3. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 198; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 113–48. These sources quote the number of dead as being between 18,000 and 21,000.
4. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 143, 252.
5. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1308.
6. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 24, 31–32.
7. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 124–25. See chap. 8 about anti-Jewish pogroms.
8. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 60–61, 116, 164, 185–86.
9. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 39–40; *Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes Reichsführer SS, Tätigkeitsberichte der 1 und 2 SS-inf-Brigade, der 1 SS-Kav-Brigade und von Sonderkommandos der SS*, 98.

10. Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine: Der Massenmord an den Juden im Militärverwaltungsgebiet und im Reichskommissariat, 1941–1943," 240–42; Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie Evreiskogo Naseleniia Ukrainy, v. 1941–1944 g. Khronika Sobytiï*, 18–19.

11. YVA, M-33/95, 189–91; Randolph L. Braham and Nathaniel Katzburg, *History of the Holocaust in Hungary*, 148–49. In the interwar period, Carpatho-Ukraine had been a part of Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, when Germany conquered Czechoslovakia, Carpatho-Ukraine was handed over to Hungary. Since the end of World War II, it has been part of the Ukraine.

12. Testimony of the policeman Ivan Pavlovitch Chaikovsky, at his May 15, 1944, interrogation in a Soviet prison, YVA, M-33/95.

13. Party archives in the Ukrainian Communist Central Committee Institute of History (Partiinyi Arkhiv Institutu Istorii Partii TSK KP Ukrainy), Fond 166, Opis 3, Delo 214. The townships from which the Jews were brought were Orinin, Chemerovtsy, and Smotrich.

14. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 80, 129.

15. YVA, 03/3517, 1–2; 03/3238, 27; 03/3766, 5. The national archive of the Russian federation during the Soviet era, "Archive in the Name of the October Revolution" in Moscow, Gosudarsdvennyi Arkhiv Rosiskoi Federatsi (GARF), Fond 7021, Opis 164, Delo 813, 3.

16. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 59, 100.

17. GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 64, Delo 815.

18. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 47, 81.

19. Partiinyi Arkhiv Ukrainy, Fond 166, Opis 3, Delo 214, 6–7.

20. These ghettos were established in towns whose Jewish populations exceeded 1,000. Jews from neighboring townships and villages were also forced into them. In Polesie, these were Antopol, Bereza, David-Gorodok, Domachevo, Drogichin, Yanov (Ivanovo), Lakhva, Luninets, Lenin, Stolin, and Kosovo. In Volhynia, these were Olyka, Ustilog, Berezno, Dubrovitsa, Gorokhov, Liuboml, Lokatche, Mezhirichi, Sarny, Stepan, Pochaiev, Kamen-Koshirski, Kremenets, Kostopol, Korets, Radzhivilov (Chervonoarmeisk), Rozhishche, Rokitno, and Shumsk; in Kamenets-Podolski these were Grichev, Dunaevtsy, Yarmolintsy, Letichev, Medzhibozh, Polonnoe, Satanov, Stara-Ushitsa, Krasilov, and Litin. In the county towns, Minkovtsy (Minkashevichi) and its surrounds, more than 2,500 Jews were murdered by Police Battalion 320 between August 30 and 31, 1941.

21. Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes, 212.

22. National Archives Washington, Captured Nazi Documents, T-345, R-168, 3818936.

23. *Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes*, 217–20. The report, dated August 12, 1941, deals with the period between July 27 and August 11, 1941.

24. Büchler, "The Part Played by Waffen SS Brigades in the Murder of Soviet Jews until 1941," 53.

25. *Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes*, 214–16; Browning, *Origins*, 280–82.

26. See chap. 10 for the decision process, from killing only men to killing all Jews.

27. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1734; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 86, 135, 137.

28. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 106, 174. The national welfare organization (NSV) helped the local Volksdeutsche.

29. Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 146.
30. I. Kondufor et al., *History Teaches a Lesson*, 38.
31. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 17–20; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 88, 140. This report mentions only the first action, which probably took place on September 4, 1941: "On September 1 and 2, 1941, leaflets and inflammatory pamphlets were distributed by Jews in Berdichev. As the perpetrators could not be found, 1,303 Jews, among them 875 Jewesses over 12 years, were executed by a detachment of the Higher SS and Police Leader." See also Elisavetskii, *Berdichevskaia Tragedia*, 27, 29–32. Reder and Koroliuk were members of the German administration.
32. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 23; Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 146; Elisavetskii, *Berdichevskaia Tragedia*, 35.
33. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 47, 80, 86, 136.
34. Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vinitaskaia Oblast*, 55–57; Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 23; Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 158.
35. Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 158; Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vinitaskaia Oblast*, 25–26.
36. YVA, M-33/1129.
37. Testimony of Mark Mashka, YVA, M-33/3163; Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 23; GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 60, Delo 305.
38. Ghettos existed in Chudnov, Radomyshl, Vcherayshe, Monastyrshchina, Ilintsi, and Yaltushkov.
39. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 94, 158.
40. *Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes*, 104, 105, 117, 123, 124, 129–32.
41. A Soviet committee of inquiry determined that 6,000 people had been murdered in Belaya Tserkov. See GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 65, Delo 241, 102.
42. YVA, M-53/171.
43. Klee et al., "*Schöne Zeiten*," 137. The Catholic priest was Dr. Reuss, and he presented a similar report to the Division's HQ.
44. Document signed by Reichenau, dated August 26, 1941, Klee et al., "*Schöne Zeiten*," 144.
45. Klee et al., "*Schöne Zeiten*," 145. Hafner testified in a postwar interrogation.
46. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 119, 196–97.
47. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-541.
48. Schoenberger and Schoenberger, *Zeugen sagen aus*, 126–28.
49. Shlein, *Babi Yar*, 46–48. N. T. Gorbacheva, a Ukrainian who lived near Babi Yar, recalls forty truckloads of Jews being brought to Babi Yar on September 22, 1941, and shot.
50. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 97, 164–65.
51. Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 189.
52. YVA, M-33/175.
53. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 106, 173.
54. YVA, H-1918/87, 9–10; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 126, 211. According to the report, the Jews "believed in the transfer [ruse] right up to the moment of their execution."

55. Shkurova et al., *Kniga Pamiati*, 21–27.
56. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 101, 168.
57. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 106, 173.
58. Shlein, *Babi Yar*, 55.
59. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 132, 228.
60. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 143, 252.
61. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:313.
62. Kondufor et al., *History Teaches a Lesson*, 46, 60.
63. Testimony of a local inhabitant who lived nearby. YVA, 33/182.
64. YVA, M-52, files number 1 and 2 (original marking: P-51-1-28, P-51-1-20).
65. YVA, M-37/1219.
66. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 132, 135, 228, 239.
67. YVA, M-53/108, 5.
68. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 156, 281.
69. Kruglov, “Istreblenie,” 183.
70. Report of the NKVD dated November 29, 1943, YVA, M-33/108. Extract of the report in the Ukraine National Archives (Gosudastvennyi Arkiv Ukrainy, Fond 166, Opis 3, Delo 243). According to this document, 6,000 Jews were killed in two murder actions.
71. Feldkommandur 239 Report, dated November 29, 1941, YVA, M-33/169.
72. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 156, 282–83.
73. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 177, 304.
74. YVA, M-33/108, NKVD report dated November 29, 1943.
75. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 132, 282. According to the report, 1,500 Jews registered in the census in Lubny. It is feasible that a large number of Jews did not register and that some registered as nationals other than Jewish.
76. Testimony of Anna Egatayova, an inhabitant of Kirovograd, YVA, M-37/1146.
77. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 94, 159.
78. NKVD report, dated April 1, 1944, regarding German war crimes in Kirovograd, YVA, M-33/108; testimony of Yevdokia Ponomarenko, YVA, M-37/1146.
79. YVA, M-33/109. In the town of Alexandrovka, 600 Jews were shot, and 470 were shot in Novogeorgievsk.
80. Testimony of Liubov Naumovna, YVA, 9613; YVA, M-33/179. According to another source, the ghetto was established only in December 1941 and existed until summer 1942.
81. Testimony of Rivka Fisher, YVA, 3502/343-f, 8–9. The ghetto in Piriatin existed until September 1942.
82. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 89, 142.
83. Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 242; NOKW-1676.
84. Partiyni Arkhiv Ukrainy, Fond 57, Opis 4, Delo 267, 217. Quote from the testimony of the priest Sviridovsky.
85. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 101, 168; YVA, M-33/276, M-33/277.
86. YVA, M-33/264, M-33/271, M-33/275, M-33/281.
87. Ukrainian National Archive, Tsentrainyi Gosundarstvennyi Arkhiv Obshchestvennykh Obedinenii Ukrainy, Fond 166, Opis 3, Delo 243, document of the Committee for the History of the Greatest Patriotic War in the Ukraine, memoirs of Rivka Berman, recorded

on January 20, 1946. The 30 remaining Jewish artisans in Pervomaysk were murdered after the German defeat in Stalingrad.

88. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 135, 242; Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 148–49.

89. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 67–68, testimony of V. Y. Tartakovskaya, who escaped from the killing place with her children.

90. Testimony of Skleer Ivan, YVA, M-33.

91. Kruglov, "Istreblenie," 174.

92. Pohl, "Schauplatz Ukraine," 150.

93. YVA, M-33/635.

94. YVA, M-37/314. In Pavlograd, some 2,000 local and neighboring Jews were concentrated in a factory and shot. See YVA, M-33/671, where it is mentioned that between November 1941 and January 1942, 3,672 Jews were shot in Pavlograd. In YVA, M-33/670, it is mentioned that 400 Jews were murdered in Novo-Moskovsk in March 1942.

95. Report of Soviet Committee of Inquiry, YVA, M-33674.

96. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 52. On the activity of Einsatzgruppe C along the Dnepr Bend, see Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 135, 241.

97. Altschuler, *Distribution*, 47. On Jewish agricultural settlement, see chap. 2.

98. According to the 1939 census, the number of Volksdeutsche in Ukraine was 393,924, and most of them lived in the counties of Nikolayev, Zaporozhe, and Dnepropetrovsk.

99. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 81, 131–32.

100. I. M. Shaikin, "Natsistskii Genotsid v Evreiskikh Koloniakh iuga Ukrainy," in S. Elisavetskii, *Katastrofa ta Opir Ukrainskogo Evreistva*, 163.

101. YVA, M-33/270. This testimony goes on to say that prior to the murder of the Jews of Frei Leben, 73 Jewish refugees from Bessarabia were arrested. They were taken to the same well and thrown in alive.

102. YVA. According to another testimony on the murder in Emmes kolkhoz, the number of Jews there was 161.

103. YVA, M-33/673.

104. YVA, M-33/54.

105. Testimony of a local gentile, YVA, M-33/275.

106. Testimony of a local gentile, YVA, M-33/110.

107. Testimony of M. Burshtein, YVA, M-332431-0; YVA, 03/4673 (Romanovski Collection).

108. YVA, M-33/54.

109. YVA, N-33/43. The documents provides the names of twenty-eight local Ukrainian and Volksdeutsche policemen, some of whom had lived alongside Jews in kolkhozes and others in neighboring German kolkhozes, such as Rotefeld, Hoffnung, and Roten Bauer.

110. YVA, 03/4673.

13. Military Administration Areas

1. Kroh, *Vitebsk, Memorial Book*, 447–51; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1577.

2. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 34, 51.

3. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 50, 85.
4. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 121; YVA, M-33/439.
5. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 73, 67, 117–18, 124, 206.
6. YVA, M-33/439.
7. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 124, 206.
8. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 264.
9. Testimony of a local inhabitant, Vasily Butrimovich, YVA, M-33/440.
10. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3047. Soennecken was a Russian translator in the intelligence department of Army Group Center.
11. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 122–24.
12. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 205.
13. *Sudebnyi Protseess po Delu o Zlodeianiakh Sovershenykh Nemetsko-Fashistskimi Zakhvatchikami v Belorusii*, 155–63.
14. *Sudebnyi Protseess po Delu o Zlodeianiakh Sovershenykh Nemetsko-Fashistskimi Zakhvatchikami v Belorusii*, 169, 165–70. Testimony of a local inhabitant, Andrei Skakyn, who worked under the Germans as a bookkeeper in the municipal administration.
15. YVA, M-33/446.
16. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 112–13; YVA, doc. 10399, prepared by Yosef Tsinman in Smolnek in 1993.
17. Gerlach, “German Economic Interests,” 221; Büchler, “Kommandostab RFSS: Himmler’s Personal Murder Brigades in 1941,” relates to the murder in Bobruisk carried out by SS Cavalry Brigade.
18. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 67, 117; 92, 151; 108, 181; 124, 206.
19. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 195, 263; Aizenshtat, *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 105.
20. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 376.
21. USHMM, R-53006 m, reel 2. The actual number of Jews was obviously greater than that of those who registered.
22. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 108, 180; 124, 205; 133, 233.
23. “An Ort und Stelle Erschossen,” *Der Spiegel* 44 (1986).
24. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 133, 234–35.
25. Trial of Karl Dietrich, YVA, TR-10/1185, 5, 10. The civilian prison camp existed until August 1943, when the remaining Jews were transferred to the ghetto in Minsk. A further 400 Jews were brought there in 1942, probably from Baranovich or from the General Government region. The discrepancy between the 6,437 Jews who registered in the census and the 3,965 Jews murdered in the action, according to the Einsatzgruppen report, is the result of the large number of Jews murdered prior to the action in which the ghetto was liquidated. See Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 108, 180–82; 124, 205; 133, 232–33.
26. YVA, M-33/481.
27. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 92, 150; 108, 180; 148, 263; 179, 310.
28. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 263–64. Once an important Hassidic center, Lyubavichi had a prewar Jewish population of over 1,000. A ghetto was created, and on November 4, 1941, all its Jews were taken to the outskirts of town, where they were murdered.

29. Sources and information on towns and townships in areas under military administration in eastern Belorussia, in which killing actions were carried out:

YVA, 03-4603: The township of Horodok in the county of Vitebsk fell on July 9, and a ghetto was established to house some 800 Jews—about half of the prewar Jewish population. The ghetto was destroyed with all its inhabitants on October 14, 1941.

YVA, 03-4676: The township of Beshenkovichi fell on June 29, with about 1,000 remaining Jews. They were all murdered on February 11, 1942.

Surazh had a prewar Jewish population of about 500. Those remaining under the occupation were forced into a burned-out building, which was blown up with the Jews inside.

YVA, M-33/478: A ghetto was established in Rogachev, and on November 1, all its 2,700 Jewish inhabitants were murdered. Some 300 Jews from neighboring townships were brought to Rogachev and murdered on February 12, 1942.

YVA, M-33-474: Above 700 remaining Jews were forced into the ghetto in Korma and murdered on November 7 and 8, 1941.

30. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 135, 238–39.

31. Kruglov, “Istreblenie,” 193.

32. Kondufor et al., *History Teaches a Lesson*, 4, 57.

33. YVA, M-33/156, 166.

34. *Kriegstagebuch des Kommandostabes*, 151.

35. *Sumskaiia Oblast v Period Velikoi Otenchestvennoi Voiny*, 210–11; YVA, M-33/390.

36. YVA, M-33/401, 403.

37. The following are details on documents belonging to the GARF Archives in YVA:

YVA, M-33/371: The prewar Jewish population of the town of Golokhov was over 1,500. An unknown number of Jews were murdered in October 1941. On December 30, 1941, the town's last 105 Jews were murdered.

YVA, M-33/375: The prewar Jewish community of the town Krolevets exceeded 600, most of whom escaped; the remaining 73 were murdered on November 26, 1941.

38. Kruglov, “Istreblenie,” 186, from the Kharkov County National Archives, P-2982-2-16, 54.

39. Kruglov, “Istreblenie,” 187.

40. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 156, 281. The military HQ mentioned here is probably that of the Sixth German Army, which was stationed at that time in Kharkov. See also Pohl, “Schauplatz Ukraine,” 147–48.

41. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 164, 289.

42. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 288.

43. Liakhovitskii, *Perezhivshie Katastrofu*, 103, testimony of Oleg Vassiukov.

44. *Documenty Obviniaiat-Sbornik Dokumentov*, 2:307–9.

45. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:797.

46. Liakhovitskii, *Poprannaia Mezusa*, 54.

47. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 191, 329.

48. Liakhovitskii, *Zheltaia Kniga*, 13.
49. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 30, Field Kommandatur 240 report, dated December 4, 1941.
50. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 177, 305. The prewar Jewish populations of Makeyevka and Gorlovka were around 3,000 and 2,400, respectively.
51. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 72–76.
52. Klee and Dressen, “*Gott mit uns*,” 113.
53. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 136, 244.
54. YVA, M-33/359.
55. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 177, 305.
56. YVA, M-33/366.
57. YVA, M-33/242. In Slaviansk, the prewar Jewish population numbered above 2,000, and 420 Jewish families were murdered there on December 2 and 3, 1941. In the town of Krematorsk, some 600 Jewish families were murdered on January 25, 1942.
58. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 64; Klee and Dressen, “*Gott mit uns*,” 113. Ortskommandatur 1/853 report, dated October 13, 1941, according to which 2,000 Jews had been executed by the SD in Melitopol.
59. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 117, 194.
60. YVA, M-33/39, 40; YVA, M-33/54, 6; memoir of the priest Vladimir Tichonovitch, YVA, M-33/103.
61. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 73, 120–21.
62. The central archives of the Soviet partisans’ headquarters. (Tsentralnyi Arkhiv Shtaba Partizanskovo Dvizhenia), Fond 90, Opis 1, Delo 69 (the archive is part of the TSKKPb Institut Istorii).
63. YVA, M-33/841 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 39, Delo 332).
64. YVA, M-33/551.
65. YVA, M-33/4672; YVA, M-33/939 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 30, Delo 1275).
66. YVA, M-33/938 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 30, Delo 247).
67. YVA, M-33/928 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 30, Delo 248).
68. YVA, M-33/961.
69. YVA, 03/4622 (Romanovski collection).
70. Aizenshtat, *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 214–15; YVA, M-33/501, M-33/509.
71. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 92, 152.
72. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 144, 254; YVA, M-33/506.
73. YVA, M-33/503.
74. YVA, M-33/511, 03/4642 (Romanovski collection).
75. YVA, 03/4671.
76. YVA, M-33/618.
77. *Zverstvo Nemetsko-Fachistskikh Zakhvatchikov, Dokumenty*, no. 12, 43–45.
78. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation (Tsentralnyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony RF), Fond 5th Army, Opis 5064, Delo 18, 39. The Jewish partisan who was hung by local police was Yevseii Gregorovitch Katz.
79. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fond 5th Army, Opis 5064, Delo 18, 36.

80. See Tsentrainyi Arkhiv RF, 56–57, which describes the murder of eight Jewish women and five Jewish children in the town of Uvarovka in November 1941. In the village of Vlasovo, two teenagers were raped and murdered. In the village of Fyedorovskoe, a Jewish woman with her three children were murdered, together with their 80-year-old Russian landlady, who had been hiding them. In the village of Salishchabo, a Jewish woman and her 4-year-old son were caught and bayoneted to death. The lady who hid them, and her daughter, were shot, and their house was burned.

81. YVA, M-33/663.

82. YVA, M-33/664. The murdered family was called Baum.

83. Descriptions of the murder of Jews in various villages can be found in Tsentralnyi Arkhiv RF, in military reports following the liberation of these regions between December 1941 and January 1942.

Document no. 19–9783–405, 46: In Fiodorovka, northwest of Tula, 60 Jews were shot.

Document no. 50–1317–50, 64 (Fiftieth Army documents): In Dubovoe, 25–30 Jews were shot.

Document 16–1317–50, 5 (Fiftieth Army documents): In Parodnoya, 20 Jews were closed in a barn and burned to death.

Other documents in the archives describe in great detail the murder of Jews in the villages of Sorgonovo (12 Jews (three families), Sodakovo (parents and 3 children), and Strokovo (parents and 5-year-old child).

84. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 144, 254.

85. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 262.

86. Testimonies of camp doctor Michail Zubkov and local inhabitant Afseyeva Alexandra, YVA, M-33/539 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 37, Delo 1).

87. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 133, 230–31.

88. YVA, M-33/482, 2.

89. YVA, M-33/482, 7.

90. YVA, M-33/482, 5.

91. From the report of a Soviet investigation committee on Nazi German war crimes in the county of Briansk, YVA, M-33/487.

92. YVA, M-33/512.

93. YVA, M-33/523.

94. YVA, N-33/577.

95. YVA, 03/4645, 03/4638.

96. YVA, 03/4637, 03/4638.

14. *Extermination of the Jews of Crimea*

1. Tyaglyi, *Holocaust v Krymu*, 6.

2. The Krimchaks (or Crimean Jews) are Jews who came to the Crimea from the Hellenistic Diaspora and later from Byzantium and Persia. They believe in the Talmud, and from a religious point of view they are considered part of mainstream Judaism.

3. The Karaites are a Jewish sect who did not accept the Oral Law and lived only accord-

ing to the Bible. Members of the sect, which originated during the second half of the eighth century, arrived in the Crimea during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, via Byzantium. The Karaites were not considered by czarist Russia to be Jews and were therefore not subject to the same restrictions as other Jews—such as closing them in the Pale of Settlement, etc. From 1836, they enjoyed full civil rights. Apart from the Crimea, their main concentration was in the Lithuanian township of Trakai, near Vilnius. The 4,000 strong Karaite community in Egypt saw themselves as Jews and immigrated to Israel.

4. Spector, “The Karaites,” 93.

5. YVA, TR-10/1076, 61–62.

6. Green, “The Nazi Racial Policy,” 37–38.

7. Spector, “The Karaites,” 95.

8. Spector, “The Karaites,” 95; Green, “The Nazi Racial Policy,” 38.

9. Spector, “The Karaites,” 96. This directive was sent to Reichskommissariat Ukraine on October 6, 1941, as part of the discussion on transferring the Crimean peninsula to German civil administration.

10. In the Warsaw ghetto, the Germans queried Professor Meir Balaban and Dr. Yitzhak Schiffer. In Vilnius, it was the historian Zelig Kalmanovich, and in Lvov they asked Drs. Leib Landau and Yaakob Shall. See Spector, “The Karaites,” 97–98; Green, “The Nazi Racial Policy,” 39–40; Zelig Kalmanovich, *Diary of the Vilnius Ghetto*, 76, 90.

11. Green, “The Nazi Racial Policy,” 40–41. Letter from ss Obergruppenführer Guttlob Berger, ss Hauptamt, to Standartenführer-ss Karl Brand, pointing out that the Karaites must be treated like the other Turkish nations. Moreover, “[persecution] is out of the question against the Karaites, taking into consideration their blood relationship [to the Turkish nations].”

12. Green, “The Nazi Racial Policy,” 40. According to Green, between 500 and 600 Karaites served in the German army and the Tatar police battalions.

13. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 142, 250.

14. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 157, 286. This report, dated January 19, 1942, refers to murdered Jews and partisans and points out that “the Tartar Self-Defense Company, [which] had already been organized and mobilized by Sonderkommando 10b . . . stood the test very well.”

15. Nuremberg Documents, NO-4234, Braune’s declaration, dated July 8, 1947.

16. See chap. 15, which deals with the German army’s attitude toward the murder of Jews. See also Nuremberg Documents, NO-4234, Manstein’s directive.

17. YVA, M-53/106.

18. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 345; testimony of Yevesii Gofsteinl.

19. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 345–46.

20. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 350–51.

21. YVA, M-33/68, M-33/70, M-33/70; Gitel Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 17.

22. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 170, 296.

23. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 265.

24. YVA, M-33/77, 3 (GARF, Fond 57, Opis 9, Delo 7021).

25. Ortskommandantur 287/1 report, dated November 16, 1941, YVA, M-53/106.

26. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 58.

27. YVA, M-33/76, 78.
28. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 59.
29. YVA, M-33/82 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 80).
30. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 33. The source is the National Archive of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea. Gosundarstvennyi Arkhiv Krymskoi ASSR, Fond p-1289, Opis 1, Delo 3, 19, 22.
31. Report of the city Ortskommandantur, 287/1, dated November 22, 1941, YVA, M-53/106.
32. YVA, M-33/60, M-33/61; Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 21.
33. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 274–75.
34. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 25–26. Page 65 contains a picture of the decree.
35. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 26–28. Testimony of Jews, who managed to escape after being caught in December, taken to the pits, and shot.
36. YVA, M-33/61, 9; Tyaglyi, *Holocaust v Krymu*, 11.
37. YVA, M-53/106, report of Ortskommandatur 287/1, dated December 7, 1941.
38. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 150, 267.
39. YVA, M-33/368, report of Soviet investigation of events under German occupation of Yalta, dated July 17, 1944.
40. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-1866. The report is signed by Major Teichman.
41. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 35–36; YVA, M-33/75 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 49). The Telman district included kolkhozes in which Jewish families resided, including Voroshilov and Novaia Zaria. Before the Jews of Voroshilov were led to the murder pits, they were told, “Take with you your valuables and best objects and enough food for ten days. You are being sent to Palestine.”
42. Kantor, *100 Years of Struggle*, 241.
43. YVA, M-33/85 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 84).
44. YVA, M-33/81 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 79).
45. YVA, M-33/81, report of the rural council of Dobroshin, in which the kolkhoz Molotov was located.
46. YVA, M-33/81, report of the rural council of Ikor.
47. YVA, M-33/79 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 61).
48. YVA, M-33/64 (GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 9, Delo 44). Two hundred Jews were murdered in the Stalin kolkhoz at the end of 1941. In February 1942, 57 Jews were murdered in the Politotdelets kolkhoz.
49. YVA, M-33/63. Details of the murders in these villages: In Sverdlovka 99 Jews were gathered on December 7, 1941, with a further 18–20 neighboring Jews and taken to a 48-meter-deep well about 400 meters from the village. The adults were shot before being thrown into the well, while the children were thrown in alive. Finally, hand grenades were thrown into the well. In Kamenka 61 Jews were murdered about 2 kilometers away from the village in January 1942, and their bodies thrown into a well. In Frunze, 17 local Jews were murdered in late February 1942 and their bodies were thrown into a well about 3 kilometers from the village. In Lekert 47 Jews were shot in February 1942 and buried by local inhabitants. In Der Emmes, 24 Jews were shot on February 28, 1941, and buried in an antitank trench, about 500 meters from the village. In Yiddendorf, 20 Jews were shot in early 1942.

50. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 36–37.
51. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 153, 272–73.
52. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 165, 292; 170, 296; 178, 309; 184, 317.
53. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 145, 256.
54. YVA, M-33/88.
55. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 190, 325–26.
56. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 193, 331–32. The report details three “screening operations,” carried out during the first half of April 1942 by a company of Einsatzgruppe D in Feodosia. Some 350 soldiers took part in each of the operations, aiding the men of the Einsatzgruppen. In these screening operations, 30 Jews were apprehended and executed. Such screening operations also took place in other Crimean towns.
57. Tyaglyi, *Holocaust v Krymu*, 17. This number includes hundreds of Krimchaks murdered during the second occupation of Kerch in June 1942.

15. German Army from “Freedom of Action” to Collaboration

1. See chap. 5.
2. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-3292 (original translation).
3. Klee and Dressen, “*Gott mit uns*,” 102.
4. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-541.
5. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20, 119, 196–97.
6. Müller, Löbel, und Freye, eds., *Die Faschistische Okkupationspolitik in den zeitweilig besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion (1941–1944)*, 203–4.
7. Nuremberg Documents, PS-4064.
8. Bartov, *Hitler’s Army*, 131.
9. Bartov, *Hitler’s Army*, 152–63. Bartov quotes from letters sent by front-line soldiers, illustrating their general frame of mind.
10. Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, 119–21. Streit quotes officers and soldiers who did not accept the murder of prisoners of war and Jews.
11. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20, 20; 24, 27; 33, 50; 73, 122; 86, 134; 106, 173.
12. Streit, “The War in the East, Anti-Communism, and the Implementation of the Final Solution,” 80–81.
13. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 31, 42.
14. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 133, 243.
15. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 262.
16. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 45, 76.
17. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 47, 79.
18. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 4, 60, 102–3.
19. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 108, 181.
20. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 20, 124, 205.
21. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 141, 263.
22. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 407–8. The 707 Infantry division was in charge of security in the rear areas of Belorussia (Security Division) and its commander was army commander of Belorussia.

23. BA-MA, RH 26-707/2
24. BA-MA, RH 26-707/2.
25. See chap.s 36 and 37, on the Jews in the partisan movement.
26. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3257. Professor Seraphim was involved in Jewish affairs and in 1938 edited an anti-Semitic publication (a kind of encyclopedia) on the Jews of Eastern Europe. See Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, 58, 250, 258.
27. Manoschek, "Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung," 62.
28. Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 160-63.
29. Kondufor et al., *History Teaches a Lesson*, 45-46. The document is to be found in the Ukraine Central October Revolution Archive, Tsentralnyi Arkhiv Ukrainy, CMF-8, Fond 454, Opis 100, Delo 633.
30. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 58, 97-98.
31. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 90, 144.
32. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 24, 32.
33. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 32, 45.
34. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 92, 152-53.
35. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 148, 264.
36. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 409.
37. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 78-81.
38. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 106, 174.
39. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 97, 165.
40. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 156, 281.
41. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 193, 331-32.
42. The document is in Belorusskii Gosundarstvennyi Arkhiv and is in the possession of the author.
43. Schoenberger and Schoenberger, *Zeugen sagen aus*, 136. See also chap. 11.
44. Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe*, 274.

16. Persecution of Jews in District Galicia

1. Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 182-83.
2. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 23. Here the number of Jews is estimated as being 620,000.
3. Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 186.
4. Transcarpatian Ukraine was under Hungarian rule.
5. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 330.
6. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 369, according to which the number of Jews in the town had reached 40,000.
7. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 370-73; Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 190-91.
8. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 77, 160, 180, 473-74, 485, 518; Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 191, 198. According to Pohl, the scope and timing of the murders in the Stanislav region, as compared with other parts of the General Government, is also connected to the personality of the region's Sipo commander, Obersturmführer-SS Hans Krüger, who was an exceptionally

cruel man. Thousands of Jews were murdered in these communities: Delyatin, some 1,950 murdered; Bolekhov, 1,000; Kosov, 2,200; Sniatyn, 500; Gorodenka, 2,500.

9. According to the 1931 census in Poland, the Jewish population of Lvov was 99,595.

10. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 27. Rabbi Kahane was in Lvov at the time.

11. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 138; Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 53. Zaderetski evaluates the Jewish population of Lvov at around 159,000.

12. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 200.

13. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 109; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:930.

14. Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 150, 154.

15. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 37–38; Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 158–60.

16. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 245–47; *Encyclopedia of the Diaspora: Ternopol*, 425.

17. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 97, 391.

18. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 448. Jews (mainly of the intelligentsia) were murdered in these towns: Chortkov, October 15, 1941, 200 Jews; Drohobych, November 30, 1941, 300 Jews; Turka, January 7–9, 1942, 500 Jews.

19. YVA, TR-10/817; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 144–45.

20. Nuremberg Documents, L-18, Katzmann's report: Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 145, writes that approximately 3,500 Ukrainian Jews and 3,800 Romanian Jews labored on the DG IV project between 1942 and 1944.

17. Romania and Transnistria

1. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 91–92; Ancel, "The Romanian Way of Solving the 'Jewish Problem' in Bessarabia and Bukovina, 1941–1942," 190.

2. Ancel, "The Jassy Syndrome," 39.

3. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 104. Murders took place in Ropcea, Iordanesti, Patrauti, Stanesti, Jadova Noua, Jadova-Veche, Costesti, Hlinita, Budinet, Cires, Vijnita, and Vijnita-Rostochi.

4. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 102–3.

5. Being part of Romania, Yassi is not included in this study.

6. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 108; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:287–88.

7. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 40, 63.

8. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:388–89; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 106

9. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:338–39; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 106–7.

10. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:412–13; Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 95–97.

11. Ion Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 110. Butnaru quotes an article by an Italian journalist, Guido Malaparte, who was permitted to visit Bessarabia. In his memoir, *Kaput*, he devotes a whole chap., "Girls of Soroca," to these young women.

12. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 67, 119.
13. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 115, 109; Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 86–89. According to other data, the number of expelled Jews across the Dnestr stood at 32,000. The Germans murdered half, and the other half were sent back to the western bank of the Dniestr.
14. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 100–102, 106; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 116.
15. Shapira, *On the Ways of Expulsion*, 41–51.
16. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:334, 359, 392; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 106–7.
17. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1351.
18. In places where the source of the numbers is in Romanian reports, the data is given exactly as in the original. In other places, numbers are rounded to the nearest 500, in both directions. The numbers do not include Jewish refugees from Poland, who arrived in Chernovtsy and about whom no data exists as to their numbers, which various estimates have as several thousand.
19. Ancel, “Antonescu and the Jews,” 242.
20. Ancel, “The Romanian Campaigns of Mass Murder in Transnistria, 1941–1941,” in Braham, *The Destruction*, 102–3.
21. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:415–16.
22. Ancel, “Antonescu and the Jews,” 246; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 124–25.
23. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:507, 510.
24. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:505–7; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 116–17.
25. Ruth Glasberg-Gold, *Ruth’s Journey*, 64–68. Ruth Gold’s parents and siblings, who had been with her on the march from Chernovtsy, died within a month of arriving in Bershad.
26. Ancel, “Romanian Campaigns,” 101–4, 106, 231.
27. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1358. Jean Ancel writes that, according to official data, the number of deportees by the end of 1941 reached 153,805, and according to classified data, the number reached 188,712. According to Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 174, “My own best estimate is that at least 125,000 Jews, possibly 145,000, reached Transnistria alive. These numbers include above 4,000 Jews from Chernovtsy who were expelled to Transnistria in the summer of 1942 and a further 2,000 expelled from central Romania (Regat).” Ioanid does not refer to the thousands who perished along the way.
28. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 190.
29. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:312–13; Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 114, 117.
30. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 43, 73; 45, 76. The number of hostages seems exaggerated and might be the result of a typographical error.
31. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 64, 110.
32. Rubin, *Dubossary, Memorial Book*, 256–58.
33. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 161–65; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:965–68.
34. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1080; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 79.

35. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 126; Ancel, *Antonescu and the Jews*, 249.
36. YVA, O-33/2188-O (henceforth, *Odessa Monograph*). The monograph is written in Russian and titled "The Destruction of the Jews of Odessa in October–December 1941, during the Occupation of the City of Odessa by the German–Romanian Army." The monograph was apparently written in 1946 in the Soviet Union by historian Shuil Borovoi.
37. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 127; Ancel, "The Romanian Way," 176.
38. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, B:900–902; Sela, "Odessa," 70–71. Sela relies on several Soviet sources. According to a memorial stone near the prison building in Odessa, from which the Jews were taken to the "artillery warehouses," the victims numbered 25,000. This number is also quoted by the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, dated June 1944.
39. Testimony of Ya'akov Maniovich, a survivor from Bogdanovka, YVA, M-3421-199, 19; Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, B:899.
40. *Odessa Monograph*, 12–13; Sela, "Odessa," 76. The decree was published in the paper *Odessaika Gazeta* 5, November 8, 1941 (henceforth *Odessaika Gazeta*).
41. *Odessa Monograph*, 13. The decree was published in the *Odessaika Gazeta*, November 17, 1941.
42. *Odessaika Gazeta*, November 20, 1941; *Odessa Monograph*, 14.
43. *Odessa Monograph*, 16. Quoted from circular number 237, dated December 2, 1941. The original document can be found in the Odessa historical archive, Odesskii Istoricheskii Arkhiv, Fond Transnistria.
44. Jean Ancel, "The Romanian Campaigns of Mass Murder in Transnistria, 1941–1942," 113.
45. Ancel, "Romanian Campaigns," 114–16; Ancel, "Antonescu and the Jews," 254–56.
46. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust*, 128–29; Ancel, "Romanian Campaigns," 118–20.
47. *Odessa Monograph*, 16–17; testimony of Ya'akov Maniovich, YVA, M-3421/188, 21–22. The indictment against Isopescu, district governor of Golta, at his trial in Bucharest in 1946, accused him of the murder of 48,000 prisoners (no mention is made of their being Jewish) in Bogdanovka. See Ancel, *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol. 6, doc. no. 125, 197–99.
48. Sushon, *Transnistria, Yevrei v Adu*, 127.
49. Bortnikev, *Odessa v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soyuza, Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov*, 2:10.
50. *Odessa Monograph*, 21. The decree was also published in the *Odessaika Gazeta* on January 12, 1941. Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 20.
51. *Odessa Monograph*, 21; *Odessaika Gazeta*, on January 12, 1941, 25. The report is kept in Odesskii Istoricheskii Arkhiv, Fond Transnistria, Opis 3, Delo 4.
52. *Odessa Monograph*, 22–24; Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 24.
53. Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 21–23.
54. *Odessa Monograph*, 25; Sushon, *Transnistria*, 128–30. Suchon quotes the document in its entirety.
55. YVA, M-39/20. The report is signed by Lieutenant Colonel Y. Grosu.

56. Sushon, *Transnistria*, 153, 172.
57. *Odessa Monograph*, 27, 29; Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 35–38, his account of the march from Berezovka to Domanevka.
58. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 84–85.
59. Ancel, “Romanian Campaigns,” 120–25; Geller, “Extermination Camps in Transnistria,” 55–56; Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 38–43. Certain sources place the number of dead at Domanevka at 15,000.
60. Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, 47.
61. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:399–400, 419–20.
62. Litani, “The Destruction of the Jews of Odessa in the Light of Romanian Documents,” 146–47.
63. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 50–53, 56.
64. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 188–89. Ioanid quotes Alexander Dallin, who said the Germans expelled 28,000 Jews, the majority of whom were from Odessa and towns and townships in Transnistria, to the Volksdeutsche settlements in the Mostovoe region, where they were murdered by the SS units, consisting of local Germans, during the first half of 1942.
65. Glasberg-Gold, *Ruth’s Journey*, 84–91.
66. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:412, 448, 465, 514.
67. Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vinitaskaia Oblast*, 83–86; *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 443.
68. The death toll in Odessa during the second half of October 1941 was around 30,000. In the camps, Bogdanovka, Domanevka, and Akmechetka, some 75,000 local Jews were shot or perished. On the exile routes, in the small camps in the Berezovka region, as well as in the ghettos in central and north Transnistria and in the region of activity of the SS, between 35,000 and 40,000 local Jews died.
69. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1371–75; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 201. According to Ioanid, the number of Jews in Transnistria in April 1942 was 87,959.

18. Killing Actions in Ostland and Grodno-Volkovysk Region

1. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 692; Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 103–6.
2. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 124–28: memoir of Anna Matsiz, Institut Istorii Partii pri TSKKPb, Fond 12, Opis 1, 11–12. The site of the murder is now known as “Yama” (hole, or dent). Some of the people rounded up in that action were taken to Tuchinka and others were transported to Koidanovo, where they were murdered. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 691.
3. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:147. Jews were brought to Baranovichi from the townships Lyakhovich, Kletsk, Molchad, Stolbtsy, and others. According to Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 691, 2,007 Jews unfit for work were murdered in Baranovichi on March 3 and 4, 1942.
4. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 178, 307.
5. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 184, 316. This report dated March 23, 1942, describes an action in the township Ilya on March 17, in which 520 Jews were murdered. The

March 27 report (Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 186, 319) counts actions in Rakov and Cherven in the vicinity of Minsk. Some 1,500 people were murdered in Cherven.

6. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 91–92.

7. *Sudebnyi Protssess*, 180–84, the Minsk trial, testimony of Franz Hess.

8. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:868–69; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 695–96; Manor and Ganozovich, *Book of Lida*, 248; testimony of Yosef Kaplan, YVA, K-3385–290. The following is a list of the towns in which massacres took place: Ivie, into which Jews were concentrated from the region and 2,500 were murdered on May 12, 1942; Vasilishki, 2,159 were murdered in May 10; Voronovo, 1,834 were shot on May 11; Radun, between 1,000 and 1,500 Jews were shot on May 10. After the massacre the remaining Jews of Voronovo, Biniakon, and Solechniki were brought to Lida.

9. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 92–93; Belorusskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv, Fond 4683, Opis 3, Delo 953, 126–27.

10. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 189, 323–24, 340. On underground activity in the ghettos and escape to the forests, see chap. 36.

11. The document is in the possession of the author, Belorussia file.

12. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4:1363; Lichtenstein and Rabinowich, *Pinkas Slonim*, 93. In *Kalkulierte Morde*, 700–701, Gerlach writes that among the Jews murdered in Slonim were also some who had been brought there from the township Kossovo.

13. Schoenberger and Schoenberger, *Zeugen sagen aus*, 137–40.

14. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, A:556.

15. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 129.

16. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 168–71.

17. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 164, point out that the number of victims in this massacre was 25,000. Shalom Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 130, writes that the number was 30,000. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 149, says that 12,000 Jews remained in the ghetto following this action, including several “illegals” who hid during the massacre.

18. *Sudebnyi Protssess*, 184–85, Minsk trial.

19. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 704.

20. Nahmani and Hino, *Pinkas Slutsk*, 144; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 248.

21. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3428. Kube, while mentioning 10,000 Jews murdered in Minsk, relates to those murdered on June 28–29. But this murder action continued on June 30–31. It seems that he did not relate also to those who were murdered on the Yubilee Square and during their escape in the streets of the ghetto and in hiding places.

22. These ten districts were Borisov, Slutsk, Baranovich, Glubokoie, Lida, Novogrodok, Slonim, Vileika, Hantsewichi, and Minsk.

23. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1:147. Prior to the action, on August 19, 1942, 700 young people were sent from the ghetto to Molodechno. Almost 500 people from the ghetto escaped to the forests.

24. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1072.

25. Zastavenko, *Prestupnye*, 128, report dated November 2, 1942.

26. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 724.

27. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 724; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 171–73; Bender, *Facing Death*, 199–201.
28. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 174, 177; *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Grodno*, 558–59.
29. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 397. In *Kalkulierte Morde*, 727, Gerlach writes that the number of Jews sent from Kelbasin to the death camps stood at only 23,000.
30. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 182–83.
31. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 191–93; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 726–27.
32. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 397; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 184, 563.
33. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 397. In *Kalkulierte Morde*, 728, Gerlach writes that at least 18,000 Jews were sent from Volkovysk to the death camps.
34. Adalbert Rückerl, *NS-Vernichtungslager*, 115–16.
35. *Grodna*, 568–71, 580–83; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 728, 731.
36. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 720.
37. After this, some 30,000 Jews remained in the Bialystock ghetto. The ghetto itself was liquidated during the second half of August 1943.
38. GARF. Fond 7021, Opis 86, Delo 40, report of Gebietskommissar of Grodno, on March 5, 1943. According to this report, 43,999 Jews were deported from the Grodno region to the death camps during actions that continued until February 5, 1943. This report does not include the 18,000 Jews deported from the Volkovysk region. Bialystock and Pruzhany are not included here, since they are now a part of Poland, and this research does not deal with them. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 729, writes that some 10,000 Jews were deported to the death camps from Pruzhany that time.
39. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 339–40.
40. Moreshet Archive at Givat Khaviva, Israel, document no. D.1.375. Weiss was a member of Sipo in charge of the ghetto.
41. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 104; Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 279–80. According to Ezergailis, the action took place on May 1, 1942.
42. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 183.

19. *Annihilation in Reichskommissariat Ukraine*

1. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 19. Spector estimates that by the end of 1941, some 20 percent of the Jewish community of Volhynia had been murdered. At the time of the German invasion, the number of Jews in Volhynia and Polesie stood at around 350,000. Therefore the number of Jews in that area at the beginning of spring 1942 ranged between 270,000 and 290,000. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 709, writes that the number of Jews in Generalkommissariat (Generalbezirk) Volhynia-Podolia in May 1942 was 326,000. He seems to have ignored the fact that many thousands of Jews had been murdered in these regions during the second half of 1941.
2. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 172–73.

3. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 61.
4. Nuremberg Documents, PS-2992. Graebe managed a German building company, Jung, which also operated in other regions of the Ukraine.
5. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:822; Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 157, 164–65.
6. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 198–99; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1309.
7. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 185–86.
8. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 125; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:924. The number of murdered Jews—17,500—cited there is exaggerated.
9. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 143–44; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 195.
10. Pearl et al., *Pinkas Ludmir*, 383–97.
11. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 116; Pearl et al., *Pinkas Ludmir*, 39–41, 543. The claim here is that 1,500 Jews, and not 500, remained in the ghetto.
12. Pearl et al., *Pinkas Ludmir*, 493.
13. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 309. In *Kalkulierte Morde*, 718, Gerlach writes, based on German sources, that in Kobrin and in other townships in its vicinity, Bereza, Drogichin, and Antopol, 14,500 Jews were murdered during that same period. The murders were carried out by the Sipo from Brest-Litovsk, members of Police battalion 320, and in smaller places by the local Ukrainian police.
14. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 237; *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Brest-Litovsk*, 485, 493–98; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 717, writes that there were between 16,000 and 19,000 Jews in the ghetto, of whom at least 15,000 were taken by train to Bronnaya-Gora and murdered. The others were shot inside the ghetto.
15. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 220–21.
16. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 719.
17. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 220–22; Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 297–98.
18. YVA, 033/13.
19. YVA, M-33/94, 2, 6, 8.
20. YVA, M-33/94, 2, 7.
21. YVA, M-33/101
22. YVA, M-33/105.
23. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 537–39.
24. YVA, M-33/173, counterintelligence report from First Gvardia Army. The report was sent to Nikita Khrushchev, then first secretary of the Communist Party in the Ukraine. The document discusses the trial of nine men who had served in the police in Volochisk, which took place in the Soviet Union in July 1944. All of them were former Soviet soldiers who deserted or were taken prisoner and joined the Germans. Apart from participation in actions such as those in Proskurov, the nine admitted involvement with the murder of Jews in Volochisk in July 1942, in which 4,000 Jews were murdered. They were found guilty of treason, and six of them were sentenced to death by hanging. The other three were sentenced to imprisonment and hard labor. The doomed men were hung in Volochisk. On the murder of the Jews of Proskurov, see also the testimony of Mikhail Orlov, YVA, 33–99.

25. YVA, M-33-99.

26. Report of a Soviet committee of inquiry, YVA, M-53-98, 2; Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vinnitskaia Oblast*, 61-63, 105. According to the testimony (62) of Yuri Rechman, after April 1942 there were 300 Jews in the labor camp in Vinnitsa who had been brought from Poland (the reference is probably to western Ukraine).

27. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 23.

28. Testimony of Eva Schlauföver-Dov, YVA, S-1946/174, 16-17, 19-21, 25-30; YVA M-33/194.

29. Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vinnitskaia Oblast*, 27, testimony of 12-year-old Israel Heller.

30. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 83, 88.

31. Agmon, *Late Testimony*, 167-68.

32. Agmon, *Late Testimony*, 73-76, 165-69, testimony of Rachel Kligman.

33. Testimony of Rivka Fischer, YVA, P-3502/343, 12; Kruglov, "Istreblenie," 184.

34. Kruglov, "Istreblenie," 193.

35. YVA, I-04/72.

20. *Mass Murder in District Galicia*

1. Between 15,000 and 18,000 were murdered in a pogrom perpetrated by the local population during the first days of occupation. By late July 1941 the Einsatzgruppen and other German police units had murdered between 8,000 and 10,000 Jews. Some 30,000 to 35,000 Jews were murdered before March 1942. Some 25,000 to 30,000 Jews died of starvation, persecution, and natural causes.

2. The first time gas had been used in Nazi Germany for murdering people was for the "euthanasia" program. Over 70,000 mentally ill or otherwise "hopeless" Germans were killed between September 1939 and late summer 1941. For this reason Hitler established a secret organization known as T4 (a reference to the organization's headquarters at 4 Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin).

3. Nickname for Ukrainian units, most of whom had formerly been Red Army soldiers, who as prisoners of war volunteered to serve the Germans. They were brought together for military training in the Travniki camp near Lublin. They were armed, supplied with uniforms, and sent among other places to the extermination camps at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

4. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 42.

5. Rückerl, *NZ-Vernichtungslager*, 133; Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 99-102.

6. The trial of six SS men who served in Belzec took place in January 1965, YVA, TR-517, 8:1512-15.

7. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 64.

8. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 39.

9. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 265, 373; Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 192.

10. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 474.

11. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 169.

12. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 248. See also *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Ternopol*, 402.
13. Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska Polityka Zagłady Żydów*, 312.
14. Nuremberg Documents, NO-5547.
15. Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 505–7. The annihilation of the Jews in the General Government was part of the Nazi Final Solution of the Jewish Question. But the timing of Himmler's order was influenced by his decision to hasten the Germanization (Eindeutschung) of vast territories in east Europe, including the General Government, and after transport difficulties, which were caused by the allocation of all available trains to supply the needs of the German offensive in the direction of Stalingrad, were solved.
16. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 175; Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 67–68.
17. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.
18. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 437–38; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1202. The two German army officers, Max Liedtke and Alfred Battel, were recognized by Yad Vashem as “Righteous among the Nations.” A few months after this occurrence, Liedtke was sent to the front, where he died, probably after having been captured by the Soviets. On December 1, 1942, Himmler wrote to Martin Bormann about the Przemysl incident and pointed out that Liedtke would be court-martialed once the war was over. See Israel Police document, Bureau 06, 1115, presented at the trial of Adolf Eichmann. At the end of World War II, the town of Przemysl was included within Poland.
19. Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 225–30.
20. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 82.
21. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 177–78; Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 90. According to both Yones and Kahane, the number of deportees was 60,000. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 41, believed the number of deportees was 50,000. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 221, writes that the minimum number of people deported in this operation was 40,000, and does not include the number of Jews murdered inside the ghetto.
22. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 41; Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 234–36, 242–43, sees the murder of Landsberg as punishment for the black market dealings. As far as the Germans were concerned, the Jewish council's purchase of food for the ghetto inhabitants constituted black market trading. See Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 178–79.
23. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 41–42; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 180–81; Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 96–100.
24. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 374–76; Pohl, “Hans Krüger,” 194–95.
25. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 248–49; *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Ternopol*, 403–8, 430.
26. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Ternopol*, 431–33. Jeannette Margolis reached Lvov, hid her Jewish identity, and survived the Holocaust.
27. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Ternopol*, 408–10; *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 249.
28. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 169–70.
29. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 87–88; YVA, 04/4–2.
30. YVA, 04/4–2.

31. Nuremberg Documents, L-18. The letter is located in the Katzmann report.
32. Berenstein, *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord, Dokumentation*, 344–45.
33. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 242–43.
34. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.
35. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 28. The evaluation of the number of Jews remaining in District Galicia is based on an evaluation of “natural” death. An analysis of the statistics in Katzmann’s report (Nuremberg Documents, L-18) permits a similar assessment, according to the following: The number murdered up to November 1942 was 254,989. The overall number of murdered, up to June 23, 1943, was 434,329. Thus, between these two dates, some 180,000 Jews were murdered. In his report, Katzmann pointed out that 21,156 Jews still lived in late June 1943 in various camps in his district. According to this data, in November 1942, over 200,000 Jews still lived there. Assuming that between November 1942 and February 1943, 50,000 Jews died or were murdered, it would appear that the estimated 140,000 to 150,000 Jews living in District Galicia in February 1943 is almost certainly correct. See Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 250. Pohl writes that according to official German data, between 130,00 and 135,000 Jews lived at that time in eastern Galicia. A further 10,000 to 15,000 “illegal” Jews living in ghettos and camps must be added to this number.

21. *Annihilation in Areas under Military Administration*

1. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 244–47.
2. *Zverstvo Nemetsko-Fachistskikh Zakhvatchikov, Dokumenty* 14, 31.
3. Testimony of M. Shmeleva-Madnova, GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 44, Delo 14. The small ghetto in the town of Shchedrin near Bobruisk was liquidated on March 8, 1942. See Aizenshtat, *Kniga Zhivyykh*, 105.
4. Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, 257.
5. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 762–63.
6. YVA, M-33–629.
7. YVA, M-33/500, 14, M-33–499, M-33/495.
8. Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, 285.
9. According to the 1939 census, the county of Voroshilovgrad had a Jewish population of 19,120; the Stalingrad county had 8,636 Jews; the town of Sevastopol had 5,988 Jews; Krasnodarski-Krai and German-occupied Caucasian areas had 15,000 Jews.
10. Partiinyi Arkhiv Ukrainy, Fond 54, Opis 4, Delo 1263; YVA, M-37/1144; Altschuler, Arad, and Krakowski, *Sovetskie Evrei Pishut Ite Erenburgu*, 123–24.
11. Pohl, “Schauplatz Ukraine,” 150.
12. YVA, M-33/65; Tyaglyi, *Holocaust v Krymu*, 12, 32.
13. Testimony of Anna Blum-Dorf, YVA, 2421/224, 1–2.
14. *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, report 16, August 14, 1942.
15. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 258.
16. Ginsburg, *Bezdna*, 65–66. Lev Ginsburg describes a 1963 trial conducted in Krasnodar in southern Russia against a group of locals who served in Sonderkommando 10a during the war.

17. Klee et al., “*Schöne Zeiten*,” 74–75. Testimony of a German member of Einsatzkommando 6 and driver of a gas van, active in Rostov in September 1942, describing the murder of Jewish men, women, and children.

18. Tsentralnyi Arkhiv RF, Fond 28, Opis 8523, Delo 33 20–21.

19. Tsentralnyi Arkhiv RF, Fond 28, Opis 8523, Delo 33 15, Elista.

20. YVA, M-33/600, 6–7, testimony at the interrogation of Gotlib Schpeidel, taken on February 5, 1943.

21. YVA, M-33/600, 1, testimony of Lieutenant Helmut Fogt, as a prisoner of the Soviets; the testimony was taken on June 30, 1943.

22. YVA, M-33/602, 1–2.

23. YVA, M-33/600, document dated July 2, 1943.

24. *Dokumenty* 2, 360–63. According to the testimony of Klavdia Ivanova, who was evacuated from Stalingrad, “On September 30, 1942, I was banished, along with my 15-year-old son and thousands of the city’s inhabitants. We were led on foot and under guard to Surovinkino. . . . A Jewish women doctor next to me was taken out and led to some place. She did not return to our group.”

25. YVA, M-33/600, 7.

26. YVA, M-33/593.

27. YVA, M-33/601.

28. YVA, M-33/593.

29. YVA, M-33/597.

30. YVA, M-33/602. A list of the names of 43 Jews and 4 non-Jews is attached. It can be determined from the names and ages of the victims that they are women, children, and old people.

31. The following are the numbers of Jews in the region according to the 1939 population census: Krasnodarski-Krai, 7,351; Kabardino-Balkar, 3,414; the autonomous republic of Kalmykia, 1,355.

32. YVA, M-33/293.

33. YVA, M-33/293.

34. YVA, M-33/294, 2–3. The testimony of a local woman, A. Silina, is attached to the report.

35. *Zverstva Nemetsko-Fashistskikh Zakhvatchikov*, *Dokumenty* 6, Voennoe Izdatelstvo, 34, 60; YVA, M-33/292.

36. YVA, M-33/308.

37. This was the number of Jews murdered in some townships and villages, as detailed in reports of Soviet committees of inquiry (Ch.G.K.), filed in the YVA:

M-33/304: In Kurnovsk, northeast of Krasnodar, 120 Jews were murdered.

M-33/289: In Tikhoretsk, northeast of Krasnodar, 316 Jews were murdered.

M-33/307: In Babinsk, west of Krasnodar, 250 Jews were murdered.

M-33/300: In Varenikovskaia, west of Krasnodar, 134 Jews were put to death in gas vans.

M-33/295: In Shcherbinovsk, 200 Jews were murdered.

M-33/298: In Labinsk, southeast of Krasnodar, some 300 Jews were murdered.

M-33/286: In Armavir, between Krasnodar and Stavropol, some 525 Jews were murdered.

M-33/306: In Kurganinsk, between Krasnodar and Stavropol, some 720 Jews were murdered.

Dokumenty 6, 41–42, 50: In Ust-Labinsk, on the Kuban, west of Krasnodar, 400 Jews were murdered. In Leningradskaia, some 300 Jews were murdered. Dozens of Jews were murdered in each of the following localities: Uspenskoie, Novo-Minskaia, Novo-Pokrovskaia, Illinskaia, and Archangelskaia.

38. After the liberation of Krasnodar, eleven Soviet citizens were tried who had served in Sonderkommando 10a and participated in the murder of Jews and communist activists. The trial took place on July 14, 1943, and was the first of its kind against German war criminals. The court sentenced eight of the eleven to death. In October 1963 a second trial took place in Krasnodar of a group of nine Soviet citizens who had served with Sonderkommando 10a and had managed through the years to hide their identity. Eight of them were sentenced to death, and one was given a fifteen-year prison sentence.

39. *Stavropole v Velikoi Otenchestvennoi Voine, 1941–1945*, 123–24.

40. *Stavropole v Velikoi Otenchestvennoi Voine, 1941–1945*, 136–37.

41. Arad, *Unichtozhenie Evreev SSSR v Gody Nemetskoii Okkupatsii, 1941–1944*, 242.

42. During the first half of February 1966, a trial was held in Mineralnye-Vodi for six local policemen who had participated in the murder of Jews. Zavadski Tarasov was one of the accused, five of whom were sentenced to death. On the trial, see *Pravda*, February 14, 1966.

43. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, no. 2, Moscow, 1945, 142–44.

44. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 263–76; Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, no. 2, 140–42.

45. *O Zlodeianakh Nemetsko-Fachistskikh Okkupantov v Stavropolskom Krae*, 17–18.

46. *Zverstvo Nemetsko-Fachistskikh Zakhvatchikov*, *Dokumenty* 6, ed. V. S. Veselova, Voennoe Izdatelstvo, 1943, 7.

47. Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, 286.

48. The Mountain Jews were also known as “Tats” because of the dialect they spoke, which was one of the Iranian dialects. Although isolated from mainstream Jewry, these Jews maintained their Jewishness. Their number on the eve of World War II was around 35,000, and they lived mostly in Kuba in Azerbaijan and Derwent in Dagestan. In dress, language, and behavior, these Jews resembled their Muslim neighbors. On the Mountain Jews, see Altschuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 32–116.

49. The issue of the racial affiliation of the Caucasian Jews arose in occupied France, when a group of local Jews from Georgia, Bukhara, Iran, and Afghanistan approached the occupying forces with the claim that, although their religion was that of Moses, racially they were not Jewish. This appeal troubled the governing authorities and researchers into racial laws in Germany.

50. Altschuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 120, 122.

51. Altschuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 120–21; *Dokumenty* 6, 7.

52. Testimony of Alexander Gusseyev from Manzhinsk, who escaped from the murder

site, YVA, 03/6970. Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, 284, writes that in both these localities about 200 families (about 1,000 people) of Mountain Jews were murdered.

53. YVA, 03/4879, 6.

54. Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, 286.

55. Brautigam, *So hat es sich zugetragen*, 535–36.

56. Altschuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 125. Altschuler quotes Wolfgang Reinholz, who handled the issue of the Mountain Jews during the German occupation of the Caucasus and who testified at a German trial: “In a memo, I emphasized that this was a tribe of Tat origin [30,000 people], who had adopted the Jewish religion in the fourteenth century and must not be counted with the rest of the Jewish nation. Gruppenführer Dr. Bierkamp shared this view.”

57. Salim Shadov in an interview by Professor A. Dallin in the late 1940s or early 1950s. See Altschuler, *The Jews of the Eastern Caucasus*, 122–24.

58. Testimony of Nushum Shmilov, a Jew who lived in Nalchik. YVA, 03/5157, 16. According to Shmilov, the Jews appealed to the leader of Kabardino-Balkar for his intervention with the German authorities; he agreed to do so.

59. Testimony of Moshe Mashiakh, YVA, 03/6879, 4.

60. *Pravda*, April 1960. A facsimile of the report was published as part of an article on the war crimes committed by Theodor Oberländer in areas of the Caucasus. Among the murdered are Jewish names such as Michael Zussman and Yuli Shenkman.

22. Transnistria

1. Ofer, “Life in the Ghettos of Transnistria,” 239–41; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 205.

2. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1200–1202, 1360; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:108–9, 455–56, 496–97, B:507–9.

3. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 217; Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1361.

4. Sushon, *Transnistria*, 181.

5. Sushon, *Transnistria*, 212, 215, 219, 223.

6. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1049.

7. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 297–99; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:374–75; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 214.

8. Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 8.

9. Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 11–17.

10. Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 35, 44–48; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:464–65.

11. Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 71; Govrin, “Life alongside Despair,” 94.

12. Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 74–77, 91; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 213–14.

13. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 217–18; Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 198; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:466.

14. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 206.

15. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 260; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:514.

16. Shapira, *On the Ways of Expulsion*, 77–80, 85.

17. Testimony of Solomon Shapira, YVA, 03/6296; Ben-Zion, *Jewish Children*, 91.
18. Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vnitskaia Oblast*, 29–31.
19. Ofer, “Life in the Ghettos of Transnistria,” 249, 252–53.
20. Agmon, Stepanenko, et al., *Vnitskaia Oblast*, 53–54. The word *Zhidivki* was derogatory to the Jews.
21. Ancel, *History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1372; Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 201. According to Ioanid, the number of Jews in Transnistria in March 1943 was 70,214.

23. *Liquidation of Last Ghettos in Ostland*

1. Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head*, 503–9. First Latvian Waffen-ss Division was mobilized in January and February 1943; Second Latvian Waffen-ss Division was mobilized in January 1944. A division was mobilized in Estonia in May 1943 that in January 1944 became the First Estonian Waffen-ss Division. Efforts at recruiting in Lithuania were less successful because of the Germans' refusal to give the Lithuanians any measure of independence. In July 1943 the Ukrainian Galichina Waffen-ss Division was mobilized. From among the Russians, too, a Waffen-ss brigade was established, known as the Kaminsky Brigade. With Himmler's consent, the Wehrmacht organized the Russian Liberation Army (Russkaia Osvoboditelnaya Armia) in September 1944 under the command of Gen. Andrei Vlasov (two divisions). Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, 503–4.

2. Afanas'ev, *Drugaya Voina, 1939–1945*, 320–25. This number, in addition to the divisions mentioned in note 1, includes the national East Legions, composed of Armenians, Georgians, Azars, Turkmens, Tatars, and other Soviet Union nationalities.

3. Nuremberg Documents, NO-1831, minutes of a meeting on July 13, 1943, in Rosenberg's office, on the matter of recruiting workers.

4. Müller et al., *Die Faschistische Okkupationspolitik in den zeitweilig besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion (1941–1944)*, 65, 263, 398.

5. Müller, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik*, 300.

6. Siemaszko, “Wileńska AK a Niemcy,” *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 198–222. Following the discovery of the murder of thousands of Polish officers in Katyn—for which the Germans accused the Soviet Union (an accusation which later turned out to be true)—diplomatic relations were severed between the Polish government-in-exile and the Soviet Union. With the approach of the Soviet army to the pre-September 1939 Polish borders, the Polish government-in-exile decided to take control of the areas of former eastern Poland. This operation was coined “Buzha” (storm) and caused incessant clashes between the AK and Soviet partisans in the forests and rural areas of west Belorussia.

7. Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 125–26, 169.

8. Between 21,000 and 22,000 Jews remained in Generalkommissariat Byelorussia; in Generalkommissariat Lithuania, 44,000 to 45,000; in Generalkommissariat Latvia, 12,000 to 13,000; in Generalkommissariat Estonia, 200 to 300; in District Galicia, 150,000; in Transnistria, 75,000; in Reichskommissariat Ukraine, between 8,000 and 15,000 Jews.

9. Nuremberg Documents, NO-2403. Himmler's order to send as many male Jews to the oil-shale area in Estonia was influenced by the urgent need to enlarge the oil-shale

production there for military use. Before World War II Germany imported oil-shale from Estonia. The fuel problem became more and more acute after Germany failed to conquer the Caucasus oil fields. In October 1942 the Baltic Oil Company, Ltd., was established in Germany, and one of its tasks was to increase the exploitation of oil-shale in Estonia. For this purpose more manpower was needed in Estonia, and the male Jews from Vilnius ghetto were deported there.

10. Nuremberg Documents, NO-1831.

11. YVA, 04/53/2, document 810, letter from Dr. Karl Vialon, head of finances in Reichskommissariat Ostland.

12. Document in the possession of the author.

13. Latvijas Archievs, Fond R-70, Opis 5, Delo 65.

14. Latvijas Archievs, Fond R-70, Opis 5, Delo 65.

15. Nuremberg Documents, NO-2074.

16. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 139; Baron and Levin, *History of an Underground*, 112.

17. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 359.

18. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 361–62, 365; Arad, *Ponary Diary*, 67–83.

19. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 271–72.

20. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 140, writes that the Gebietskommissar of Kaunas “agreed for Jews to be accommodated in the Kaunas ghetto, while the Sipo refused at the last moment, because of information in its possession that these Jews had ties with Russian partisans. The order was given in the end to exterminate them all.”

21. Kanc, *Svintzian Region Yizkor Book*, 1665, 1685, 1716.

22. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 367–72. Six of the 300 Jewish inmates of the Baltoji-Voke camp escaped to the forests in late June 1943, and 67 others were shot in retaliation. The remainder were returned to Vilnius. In the Kana labor camp, all 240 Jewish workers were murdered on July 8, after being accused of contact with the partisans in the forests. The following day, about 350 Jews were murdered in the Bezdonys camp. A few dozen Jews worked in the Zaczepki labor camp, which was commanded by the Todt organization. After the arrival of the Sipo from Vilnius with an order to transfer the camp inhabitants to Vilnius, the Todt people, suspecting that the real objective was to exterminate the workers, decided to carry out the transfer themselves. In this way they saved their workers. In late July 1943, the labor camp at Naujoji-Vilnia, the last in the Vilnius region, was liquidated and its inmates were taken to Panerai and shot.

23. Bubnys, “Lithuanian Police Battalions,” 22–23.

24. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 404–7; Kalmanovich, *Diary of the Vilnius Ghetto*, 78–83; Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 361–62, 365.

25. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 391; Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 181, 186–87.

26. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 425–27.

27. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 429–32.

28. Dror, *Klooga in the Remote North*, 17.

29. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 150, 155–56, 204–15.

30. Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Shavli*, 270–71, 275, 292, 302–6; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 679.

31. *Masines Zudynes Lietuvoje: Dokumentu Rinkinys* (1941–44), vol. 1, *Vilnius*, 243–44 (Mass murder in Vilnius, a compilation of documents). The part of the report that deals with the mass escape and revolt refers to events in Vilnius on August 6, 1943, when the first transport left Vilnius for Estonia.

32. *Masines Zudynes Lietuvoje*, 244–45. On the Jewish underground in the Vilnius ghetto, see chap. 36.

33. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 23; Baron and Levin, *Story of an Underground*, 325–55.

34. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 181, 212.

35. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 441–42.

36. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 359. Ezergailis writes that according to an official population census carried out by the Germans in February 1943, there were 8,060 Reich Jews in Latvia. It may be assumed that the number of Reich Jews by mid-1943 would have stood at 7,000 to 7,500. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 41.

37. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 125–32.

38. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 367, 372; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 287–88.

39. Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 152–53.

40. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 361; Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 134–35.

41. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 104, 158.

42. Kaufmann, *Die Vernichtung*, 337–38; Penney, *I Was There*, 87–89.

43. Kaufmann, *Die Vernichtung*, 339–40; Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 3, 158–59.

44. Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945*, 563–64.

45. YVA, 03/5823, 10–22.

46. Testimony of Shoshana Schwartz, who was sent from the north Transylvanian town of Oradea-Mare to Auschwitz and from there to Latvia, YVA, 03/9593; testimony of Shoshana Braun, who was sent to Auschwitz from Kosita in Transcarpathian Ukraine and then to Latvia, YVA, 03/8627.

47. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 54–60.

48. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 85, 98, ref. 125.

49. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 493–511.

50. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 102.

51. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 168–78, 184–97.

52. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 125–29, 135–38; Yerushalmi et al., *Pinkas Shavli*, 354–55. The assumption that these people were sent to Auschwitz is based on the fact that, at that time, this was the only active extermination camp.

53. *Nuremberski Protse, Sbornik Materialov*, 3:300–303.

54. YVA, TR-10/808, trial of Gert Erren, Gebietskommissar of Slonim, 184–86, 188.

55. Stein, *The Book of Baranovich*, 610–14.

56. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:812, 22,000 Jews were murdered in Koldichevo, Novogrudok region. This number seems exaggerated. See YVA, M-33/1159, 2–3, 6.

57. Eliezer Yerushalmi et al., *Pinkas Novogrudok*, 289–90, 321, testimony of Shaul Gorodinsky, YVA, G-3095/230, 16, 19–20; testimony of Mordechai Meyerovich, YVA, 1285/77, 56;

testimony of Eliyahu Berkovich, YVA, B-2053/192, 15–16; testimony of Daniel Ostanshinsky, YVA, A-3118/228, 21.

58. YVA, A-3118/228, 27–28; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1073.

59. YVA, TR-10/69, Sobibor trial in Germany, 13:2575–76.

60. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 227. On the Glubokoie ghetto uprising, see chap. 36.

61. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 133–34.

62. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 171–81.

63. Nuremberg Documents, NO-4317.

64. Kohl, *Ich wundere*, 221, contains the entire letter.

65. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 212–13, 217–19.

66. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 221.

67. Baram, *Where Was the Sun?* 58–61.

68. Pecherski, *The Uprising in Sobibor*, 6–8.

69. Alexander Pecherski led the uprising together with the group of Jewish prisoners brought from Minsk. In Sobibor they joined up with an active underground group. See Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 322–33.

70. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 192–93, writes that about 90 ghetto Jews arrived in the forests immediately after this action. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 135–36, quotes several Jews who remained in hiding until Minsk was liberated.

71. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 138.

72. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 446.

73. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 195.

74. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 190–98. Levin (*Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 554) writes that some 2,500 people survived from among the Jews of Kaunas banished to Stutthof and those Jews who were sent from there to various camps in Germany.

75. Yerushalmi et al., *Pinkas Shavli*, 384–85, 392–93. Levin (*Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 670–71) writes that of the Jews of Siauliai who were transferred to Stutthof, about 500 survived.

76. Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 3.

77. Testimony of Shlomo Gertzberg, according to which the Germans shot some 2,500 Jews in various camps prior to their withdrawal from Latvia. YVA, M-33/999; Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 190; Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 368.

78. Abraham Shpungin recalls, “The camps at Dundaga and Paperwalen were transferred en mass on foot to Liepaja, a distance of some 40 kilometers away. As some 5,000 Jews were on the march—two-thirds of them were from Hungary and the remainder were ‘ghetto veterans’—around 100 Latvian Jews escaped. But most of them were brought to Telsiai and shot.” Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 164.

79. Testimony of Shoshana Schwartz, YVA, 03/9593.

80. Schneider, *The Unfinished Road*, 190. Schneider writes that no more than 900 of the Latvian Jews who were deported managed to survive, including some of the Jews of Kaunas who were in camps in Latvia. Of the deported Reich Jews who were deported, no more than 800 survived.

81. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 44.

82. About 12,000 Jews had been brought to Estonia in August and September 1943. In an action in February 1944, around 800 Jews were murdered. Under the harsh conditions in the Estonian camps—extremely hard labor which resulted in a high “natural” mortality rate and execution for any breach of discipline, it is feasible to assume that by the spring of 1944 the number of Jews had been reduced by at least a quarter.

83. Dror, *Klooga in the Remote North*, 9.

84. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 338–39; Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 546.

85. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 330–31; Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 555–56.

86. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 557–63.

87. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 333, writes that these prisoners were Estonians who refused to join the German army.

88. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 566–68; Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia*, 333–36.

24. Liquidation of Last Ghettos in Ukraine

1. Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy*, 234–45; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 268–70.

2. Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy*, 175–76; Prus, *Atamania UPA*, 91–93, 124; Yones, *Evrei Lvova v Gody Vtoroi Mirovoi Voyny*, 301, 304, 309–10.

3. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 271–72.

4. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 248–49; Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 285–87; Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 133.

5. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 44; Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 298–301; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 184–88; Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 258–59.

6. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.

7. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 376.

8. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 250–51.

9. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 170–71.

10. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 98–99.

11. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 88–89.

12. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 404, 475, 502–3.

13. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.

14. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 260–65. Pohl describes the murder of Jews in various places in east Galicia during those months.

15. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 219–20; testimony of Leib Schmieder.

16. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 326–48. Yones mentions a further seventeen camps not named in Katzmman’s report that were liquidated during those months.

17. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 403.

18. Petr Vershigora, *Luidi s Chistoi Sovestiu*, 476.

19. Weiss at al., *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 404.

20. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 225; Zaderecki, *Lvov under the Swastika*, 321–22; Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, 360.

21. V. Lukin et al., *100 Evreiskikh Mestechek Ukrainy, Poldolia*, 1:122.

22. Kruglov, *Unichtozhenie*, 90.

23. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 116.

25. *Survival in Transnistria*

1. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 201.

2. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:375–77; Ben-Zion, *Jewish Children*, 123, 132. In general, the value of aid to Transnistria would be \$945,000, in terms of the period under discussion.

3. Ben-Zion, *Jewish Children*, 164.

4. Ben-Zion, *Jewish Children*, 221–23; Ofer, *By Sea*, 293–300.

5. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 249–54.

6. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:380.

7. Ben-Zion, *Jewish Children*, 259. Several hundred of the returning children emigrated to Palestine during the spring and summer of 1944, in spite of German objections.

8. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:378, B:510; Ioanid, *The Holocaust*, 255–56.

9. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 256.

10. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 256–57; Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:381–82.

11. Shapira, *On the Ways of Expulsion*, 112–15.

12. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, B:510.

13. Govrin, *In the Shadow of Destruction*, 96–98.

14. Ancel and Lavi, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Romania*, A:382, 447.

15. Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania*, 224, 289. Ioanid estimates the number of victims as being at least 75,000 and the survivors as being 50,000. In *The History of the Holocaust: Romania*, 2:1389, Ancel writes that the overall number of deportees to Transnistria was 195,000; the number of survivors was around 50,000 and the number of dead, 145,000.

16. Altschuler et al., *Sovetskie Evrei*, 138.

26. *Action 1005*

1. Nuremberg Documents, NO-3947; Spector, “Aktion 1005 — Effacing the Murder of Millions,” 159.

2. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 159; YVA, TR/10761, 98. Arrested after the war, Oberleutnant Ferdinand Hanisch, commander of the gendarmes who conducted the massacre at Babi Yar, described the prisoners under his command as “sentenced to death” (*zum Tode verurteilt waren*).

3. International Military Tribunal (Blue Series), 7:592f.

4. Nuremberg Documents, NO-3947.

5. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 161; Weliczker, *Brygada Śmierci*, 51, 56, 59, 62–63, 72–74, 84. Weliczker was one of the Jewish prisoners employed in burning the corpses in Piaski and elsewhere. He managed to escape.

6. Weliczker, *Brygada Śmierci*, 90–91, 96–97, 117–21. The places where they burned bodies were Wolki, Jaryczow, Brzuchowits, Dornfeld, and Bobrki.

7. Testimony of Trubakov given on April 14, 1967, YVA, TR-10/762, 313–15. After the murders that took place at the spot in late September 1941, the Germans blew up certain places along the steep sides of the ravine, and the resulting loose earth provided a thick covering for the corpses. On the escape from Babi Yar and escapes from the sites of Aktion 1005 and the 9th Fort in Kaunas and from Panerei in Vilnius, see chap. 36.

8. Nuremberg Documents, NO-3947.

9. JTA Bulletin, 30.11.1943. The news had been received on November 29, 1943.

10. YVA, TR-10/761, 36–37, 60–66.

11. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 164. Some 30,000 Jews were murdered in Dnepropetrovsk.

12. YVA, 0–53–24, 1–3. The report was written on July 25, 1944. Minsk was liberated on July 4, 1944.

13. Kohl, *Ich mündere*, 235–34. Georg Heuser was head of the Sipo in Minsk.

14. YVA, TR-10/692, judgment at the trial of Max Krahner, 72–73.

15. YVA, TR-10/692, judgment at the trial of Max Krahner, 89–98; Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 166.

16. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 165.

17. YVA, M-33/440, 2. The source can be found in GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 84, Delo 3.

18. YVA, M-33/446.

19. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 165–66.

20. YVA, M-33/1114.

21. Sara Bender, “On Employment of Jews in the Sonderkommando 1005, in the District of Bialystok”; Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 168.

22. Nuremberg Documents, NO-3947.

23. Lemmik and Martison, 12,000, 89–91; Kruus, *People, Be Watchful!* 110–11.

24. Spector, “Aktion 1005,” 164.

25. Faitelson, *Heroism and Bravery in Lithuania*, 166–88, 233–35. Alex Faitelson was among the Jewish prisoners employed in burning corpses, and he was one of those who managed to escape.

26. Baron and Levin, *History of an Underground*, 172–73.

27. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 162; Gar, *Thus it Came to Pass in Lithuania*, 185.

28. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 445.

29. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 462–66.

30. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 445.

31. Blobel was arrested after the war and was a key witness at the Einsatzgruppen trial (no. 9). He was sentenced to death in 1948 and was hung at the Landsberg prison in Bavaria on July 8, 1951.

27. *Murder of Mixed Marriages, Their Offspring*

1. Altschuler, “Mixed Marriage among the Jews,” 22.

2. Altschuler, “Mixed Marriage among the Jews,” 35–39. Statistics relating to 1924–27

show that 28.7 percent of Jews in the Russian Federal Republic married non-Jews; in the Ukraine, it was 8.7 percent; in Belorussia—5.5 percent.

3. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 48; Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 245.

4. The National Archives of the Soviet Republic of Lithuania—Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Litovskoi SSR—Fond R-1534, Opis 1, Delo 186.

5. See chap. 9 on the definition of a Jew.

6. The document is taken from the Riga Archives, USHMMA, Reel 5, Fond R-70, Opis 5, Delo 34.

7. Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Latvskoi SSR, Fond P-69, Opis 1, Delo 6.

8. YVA, o/18–172.

9. USHMMA, Reel 5, Fond R-70, Opis 5, Delo 34. Alfred Wetzel headed the Office on Race Affairs in the Ministry for Eastern Occupied Territories.

10. TSGIA LatSSR, Fond P-69, Opis 1a, Delo 6, 52–54.

11. Nuremberg Documents, NO-626; Fleming, *Hitler*, 96.

12. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 216, 350.

13. YVA, M-53/103, 6–8, testimony of Alexander Shilko.

14. YVA, M-33/1213, 4.

15. YVA, M-33/108, 5.

16. YVA, M-33/36.

17. YVA, M-33/75.

18. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 256–57.

19. Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 22.

20. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 409.

21. Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 450–51.

22. The document is taken from the Riga Archives, USHMMA, Reel 3, Delo 18, Opis 1a, Fond R-69.

23. YVA, M-33/1004, 9.

24. Stein, *The Book of Baranovich*, 524. The book tells of a woman called Bitanski who was given permission to leave the ghetto and return to her Christian husband on the condition that she undergo sterilization. The procedure was carried out in the municipal hospital. Further cases are mentioned in which ghetto women were permitted to return to their Christian husbands.

25. *Naujoji Lietuva* (New Lithuania), October 10, 1941.

26. TSGIA LitSSR, Fond R-715, Opis 1, Delo 2, 369–70.

27. USHMMA, Reel 3. The document is taken from the Riga Archives, Fond R-69, Opis 1a, Delo 18.

28. TSGIA LitSSR, Fond P-1026, Opis 1, Delo 3, 202–3.

29. *Amtsblatt des Generalkommissariats Volynien-Podolien*, the official newspaper of Generalkommissariat Volhynia-Podolia.

30. D. I. Klibson, *Spasennoe Pokolenie*, 32. A broad scientific review of the evacuation of the children of besieged Leningrad was conducted by the Historic Museum of Leningrad in 1984, YVA, 8311.

31. Interrogation report of members of the NKVD, sent by the NKVD head in the Ukraine, Riasnoi, in October 1943 to Lavrentii Beria, NKVD head in Moscow, YVA, M-33/52, 2–5.
32. YVA, M-33/52, 19.
33. YVA 048/91. In 1987, the Kirovograd district paper, *Kirovogradskaia Pravda*, published an article signed by S. Mikolaenko, describing the murder of the children.
34. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 3:226.
35. Elisavetskii, *Berdichevskaia Tragedia*, 36.
36. The piece was published in a Minsk Russian-language periodical, *Vesna 2* (Spring 1994): 15.
37. Klibson, *Spasennoe Pokolenie*, 6–7.
38. Malich, *Dvadtsat Let i Tri Dnia*, 67–68.
39. *Dokumenty Obviniaiat*, 2:162–64.
40. YVA, 03/5949, 2–3, 5. This testimony describes the murder of Jewish children in the convalescence home in which Vadim Maniker was hospitalized and does not cover all the victims in Teberda.
41. YVA, M-33/286, testimony of Vera Olshevskaiia, August, 13, 1943, at a Soviet committee of inquiry.
42. Klee and Dressen, “*Gott mit uns*,” 89 (part of a German military police report dated July 1942, on the murder of 113 retarded and physically handicapped children in the township of Isakovo, near the Russia town of Viazma), 93 (testimony on the murder of 42 children in Karsnodar in September 1942), 95 (testimony on the murder of 60 children in Kharkov by Sonderkommando 4a in late August 1942).

28. *Murder of Jewish Prisoners of War*

1. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 427.
2. Nuremberg Documents, NO-3414.
3. Nuremberg Documents, PS-502; Streim, *Die Behandlung Sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener*, 70.
4. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1519; Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, 181–82.
5. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-2423.
6. Army collecting points were the first place where the prisoners were concentrated. The transit camps were a little more in the rear.
7. Streim, *Die Behandlung Sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener*, 142–43.
8. Bondarets, *Voennoplennye*, 36–38.
9. Testimonies of villagers in the area of the town Voronezh, YVA, M-33/496.
10. YVA, 03/2375.
11. YVA, M-33/977.
12. Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen, Ludwigsburg, 4, 302, AR-2, 40/68, B2. The trial took place in Stuttgart, and the document from which the quote is taken is dated November 4, 1971.
13. Altschuler et al., *Sovetskie Evrei*, 135–36.
14. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 132, 227.

15. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 149, 265.
16. YVA, TR-10/1182(2), TR-10/689.
17. YVA, M-33/670.
18. YVA, M-33/626.
19. Krivosheyev, *Grif Sekretnosti Sniat*, 340.
20. Beizer, "Treatment of Soviet Jewish War Prisoners," 12–13, 18–19.
21. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 23, 49–50, 55.
22. Beizer, "Treatment of Soviet Jewish War Prisoners," 13–14.
23. From a lecture by Sarah Beizer at the twelfth international conference of the World Congress of Jewish Sciences in Jerusalem. A list was attached to the conference paper with the names of the 70 Jewish POWs and the dates on which they were handed over to the Germans. Beizer had prepared this list from documentation she had found in the Finnish War Archives in Helsinki. Document T 19659 B 18 B 19.
24. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 69–70, testimony of Cilli Lichkiss, who was in Finnish captivity.
25. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 2.
26. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 58.
27. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 65.
28. Iantovski, *Lager Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh-Evreev v Finlandii*, 46–47.
29. Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 152–58. Anthoni was put on trial in 1947 and imprisoned. See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*, 36.
30. Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 170. Finland's special status was the result of the respect it had gained in Germany for its courageous fight against the Soviet army in the "winter campaign" of November 1939 through March 1940.
31. Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 168.
32. Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 163–68, 256–57; Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head*, 397.
33. Beizer, "Treatment of Soviet Jewish War Prisoners," 16; Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 258–60.
34. Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem, 525/5267.
35. Beizer, "Treatment of Soviet Jewish War Prisoners," 20, 23–24.
36. YVA, 033/2537, 2, 8, 31, 32.

29. *Extermination of Jews from the Third Reich*

1. Browning, *Origins*, 320–25.
2. Peter Witte, "Zwei Entscheidungen in der 'Endlösung der Judenfrage,'" 41, 45; Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, 86.
3. Jäckel, *Hitlers Herrschaft*, 117.
4. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, 476–80. Browning, *Origins*, 387, writes that the housing shortage was a useful pretext but not the major reason for the deportations.
5. Browning, *Origins*, 381.
6. On the murder actions in the Minsk ghetto, see chap. 11.

7. Kruglow, "Deportacja," 377.
8. Müller et al., *Die Faschistische Okkupationspolitik in den zeitweilig besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion*, 225–26.
9. Kruglow, "Deportacja," 377–78.
10. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 151, 269.
11. Bubnys, "Lithuanian Police Battalions," 11.
12. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 151, 269.
13. Browning, *Origins*, 396–97.
14. Browning, *Origins*, 396.
15. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 298.
16. Baram, *Where Was the Sun?* 26–30.
17. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 151, 269.
18. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 213. Before World War I, Karl Löwenstein had served as aide-de-camp to the German Crown Prince, and the two maintained ties for several years. After World War I he took part in the battles of the German Free Corps (*Freikorps*) in Upper Silesia. With the rise of Nazism in 1933, Löwenstein converted to Christianity. In November 1941, he was accused by the Gestapo of church-inspired anti-Nazi activity and expelled to Minsk as a Jew, in accordance with the Racial Laws. Generalkommissar Kube heard about Löwenstein's past and intervened to have him sent to Theresienstadt on May 13, 1942. Löwenstein survived the Holocaust and wrote a book about the ghetto of German Jews in Minsk.
19. Löwenstein, *Minsk*, 19–22, 39.
20. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3665.
21. Löwenstein, *Minsk*, 32–33, 35–36; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 216–17; Baram, *Where Was the Sun?* 40–41, 46–49.
22. Löwenstein, *Minsk*, 31; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 222–23. The man who murdered the Jewish council members was Obersturmführer Karl Burckhard.
23. Löwenstein, *Minsk*, 47; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 223.
24. Rosenberg, *The Years of Horror*, 55–57.
25. Nuremberg Documents, PS-3428.
26. Kruglov, "Deportacja," 392; Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 138.
27. Kohl, *Ich wundere*, 229–30.
28. Kohl, *Ich wundere*, 83–86, 96–98; Baram, *Where Was the Sun?* 57–58, 60–61.
29. Freund and Safrian, *Vertreibung und Ermordung*, 31–32; Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, 698. According to Gilbert, 20 people managed to escape and hide in the woods; six days later the Soviet army liberated the region.
30. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 26.
31. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 28.
32. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 358–59; Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Latvia and Estonia*, 283.
33. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 141.
34. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 17.
35. Schneider, *Journey into Terror*, 61.
36. Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia*, 3–4, 360–61.

30. *Confiscation and Plunder*

1. See chap. 4.
2. On the structure of the German system responsible for economic exploitation of the occupied territories, see chap. 5.
3. Nuremberg Documents, PS-212.
4. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1138. See also chap. 9.
5. *Verkündungsblatt des Reichskommissars für das Ostland*, October 24, 1941, in Kadikis, *My Obviniaem*, 72–73.
6. YVA, M-33/1045, JM 10606.
7. USHMM, Fond RG, Opis 53002, Delo M, Reel 22, letter, August 11, 1942.
8. YVA, O-3/161.
9. Adamushko et al., *Nazi Gold from Belarus*, 110–13.
10. YVA, M-33/1049, JM 10606.
11. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 365.
12. YVA, O-51/310, JM 13084.
13. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 95–97.
14. Stein, *The Book of Baranovichi*, 516–17.
15. Spector, *Pinkas Volhynia and Polesie*, 198, 236, 295–96; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:1132, 1308.
16. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 108–9.
17. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 23, 35; Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 146.
18. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 59.
19. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 100.
20. YVA, O-51/333, list of property delivered to various institutions in Brest-Litovsk.
21. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 225–27, 266.
22. Chernoglazova, *Tragedia*, 73, 75.
23. Gutterman, *Days of Horror*, 38–40.
24. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 58–61.
25. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 36.
26. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 100.
27. YVA, M-52/198, mayor's announcement.
28. *Sudebnyi Protssess*, 155–56.
29. Ginsburg, *Bez dna*, 65–66; YVA, M-33/76, M-33/78, M-33/224.
30. Dean, "Jewish Property Seized in the Occupied Soviet Union in 1941 and 1942."
31. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 125, 208; 133, 235.
32. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 106, 172, 174.
33. Pohl, "Hans Krüger," 195–96.
34. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 19.
35. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-2926.
36. USHMM, Fond RG, Opis 53006, Delo M, Reel 5.
37. USHMM, Fond RG, Opis 53006, Delo M, Reel 5.
38. Liakhovitskii, *Zheltaia Kniga*, 13.
39. YVA, M-52/242.

40. USHMA, Fond R-69, Opis 1a, Delo 18.
41. Nuremberg Documents, NO-5124.
42. Hilberg, *Destruction of European Jews*, 363–64; USHMA, Fond R-70, Opis 5, Delo 34, Reel 5.
43. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.

31. *Pillage of Cultural Assets*

1. Nuremberg Documents, PS-136.
2. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1015.
3. Hartung, *Raubzüge in der Sowjetunion*, 13–15, 24–25, 27.
4. Manasse, *Verschleppte Archive und Bibliotheken*, 33–36.
5. Hartung, *Raubzüge*, 51, writes that the OKH had a special department for confiscating works of art. A special unit also operated in the occupied Soviet territories and was responsible for collecting art treasures for display in a giant museum that Hitler planned to establish in his home city of Linz, Austria.
6. Nuremberg Documents, PS-1015(c).
7. Nuremberg Documents, NOKW-1441.
8. Zeidevich, *Dama s Gornostaem, Kak Gitlerovtsy Grabili Khudozhestvennye Sokrovishcha Evropy*, 52–54, 196–97.
9. Nuremberg Documents, PS-149.
10. YVA, FA-73/1–2, Film Department, negatives 6019, 6020, 6021, 6037, diagrams prepared by special HQ Rosenberg in order to illustrate its activity. Zeidevich, *Dama*, 199–200, 204–5.
11. YVA, Microfilm JM/10633. The original is located in the central national archive of the Ukrainian public organizations, Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Gromadiskikh Obednan Ukraini, Fond 3676, Opis 1, Delo 128 (henceforth TSDAGOU).
12. YVA, Microfilm JM/10633.
13. Sutzkever, *The Vilnius Ghetto*, 97; Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 108.
14. Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 212–14, 231, 267–68, 296; Dr. Pohl's report sent from Vilnius on April 28, 1942, YVA, Microfilm JM/10633. In appendix I to this report, Dr. Pohl wrote about a safe in the Yivo containing manuscripts and valuable printed works and that soldiers had removed all its contents before his arrival. He also mentioned that twenty crates of books had been taken away by an unknown German agent during the late autumn of 1941.
15. YVA, Microfilm JM/1762.
16. Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 461–62, 472–73; Kalmanovich, *Diary of the Vilnius Ghetto*, 73, 91–92, 129.
17. YVA, Microfilm JHM/10633.
18. Smerke Kaczerginski, *Partizaner geyen!* 69. See also Kalmanovich, *Diary of the Vilnius Ghetto*, 73–74.
19. Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 362, 532; Kalmanovich, *Diary of the Vilnius Ghetto*, 78, 82, 105, 129–30.

20. YVA, Microfilm JM/10633.
21. YVA, Microfilm JM/10633.
22. YVA, Microfilm JM/10632 (the source is in TSDAGOU, Fond 3676, Opis 1, Delo 50).
23. YVA, Microfilm JM/10632 (the source is in TSDAGOU, Fond 3676, Opis 1, Delo 39).
24. YVA, Microfilm JM/10632 (the source is in TSDAGOU, Fond 3676, Opis 1, Delo 50).

32. *The Local Population*

1. See chap. 4.
2. See chap. 8.
3. This conclusion is based on the following research: Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*; Yones, *Evrei Lvova v Gody Vtoroi Mirovoi Voyny*; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*; Altman, *Zhertvy Nenavisti*, and other memoirs and testimonies of survivors.
4. Nuremberg Documents, L-180, 64.
5. Vojensky Historicky Archiv, Fonds Kdos RF SS in Prague.
6. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, reports 37, 55; 43, 68; 81, 131–32; 406, 171; 135, 237; 177, 304; 178, 307; 186, 319.
7. See chap. 9 for difficulties in the mobilization of Schutzmannschaften in Belorussia.
8. Garfunkel, *Lithuanian Jewry*, 4:48, 50, 56, 58–59.
9. Kaufmann, “War Years in Latvia Revisited,” 352, 366.
10. Smuschkowitz, Silverman, and Smuszkowicz, *From Victims to Victors*, 82–83.
11. YVA, 03/4614.
12. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 631–32. See also chap. 27 on the rescue of Jewish children from orphanages in Minsk.
13. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhymian Jews*, 238–39.
14. Friedman, “The Jews on the Aryan Side,” *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora*, Lvov, 699–700.
15. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 10, 2; 67, 114; 153, 272. The Poles are referred to as anti-German elements. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhymian Jews* 246–49.
16. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 634–35.
17. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 215–16.
18. Liakhovitskii, *Holocaust na Ukraine i Antisemitism v Perespektive*, 18.
19. Liakhovitskii, *Perezhivshie Katastrofu*, 168–79.
20. Liakhovitskii, *Perezhivshie Katastrofu*, 70.
21. Rubenstein and Altman, *Unknown Black Book*, 250–54, the story of Sofia Ozerski; YVA, 03–4676. Being a youth, and following many trials, Ya’akov Genin managed to cross the front line.
22. YVA, M-52–1.
23. Gubenko, *Kniga Pechali*, 65.

33. *The Righteous among the Nations*

1. In France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and Denmark, underground groups rescued Jews. In Poland, too, there was an underground group known as Żegota. The contacts that

the Jewish underground had with non-Jewish undergrounds in Minsk, Vilnius, and elsewhere in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union produced no help. See chap. 36.

2. There is no official Soviet data about the population that remained under German occupation. My numbers are estimates. The entire Soviet population of the occupied territories before the war began was around 75 to 80 million. About 12 million escaped or were evacuated, and millions were mobilized into the army.

3. Close to 2.5 million of Jews lived in the Ukraine in June 1941, out of about 5.2 million Jews in all of the Soviet Union.

4. Mordechai Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 248–50, 251–52.

5. Mordechai Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 246–48. After the war Gotautas remained in western Germany. The Jews he had rescued helped him to gain access to a nursing home, where he died some years later.

6. Neshamit, “Rescue in Lithuania,” 303–4. While in the ghetto, Avraham Sutzkever collected and hid Jewish cultural treasures.

7. Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 240. After being freed, Simaite lived in France; she died in 1970.

8. Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 241–43.

9. Neshamit, “Rescue in Lithuania,” 316–18.

10. Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 260–61; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:876–77.

11. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 266.

12. For the UPA, see chap. 24.

13. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 244–45, 250–51.

14. The Baptist sect of Christianity reached Russia during the nineteenth century and had several million followers.

15. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 266–67.

16. Friedman, “The Jews on the Aryan Side,” 699–700.

17. Yad Vashem, “Righteous among the Nations” department, file no. 216. Lozinska’s maiden name was Kazimiera Porai.

18. Yad Vashem, “Righteous among the Nations” department, file no. 7761 —Belorussia, 1–4. After the liberation of Minsk, the Soviet authorities arrested Orlov and accused him of collaborating with the Germans. Several orphanage workers in Minsk, a Jewish female partisan, and twelve children he had rescued (including Neli Gerbovitskaia) wrote to the NKVD in 1944 and intervened on his behalf. The accusations were subsequently cancelled. See Motl Grubian, “Die Mama vun Zvanzig Kinder,” *Sovietish Heimland* 5 (1975): 181.

19. Paldiel, *Path of the Righteous*, 283–85. Gromov joined the partisans and fell in battle on the eve of liberation.

20. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 366–67.

21. Yad Vashem, “Righteous among the Nations,” department, file no. 6228. In the summer of 1943, the Soviet authorities banished the Karachaevtsy nation to central Asia, accusing them of collaborating with the Germans. The Kholomliiev family was among the banished. The Gaidman sisters maintained contact with their rescuers in their exile and visited them. Years later the family was granted permission to return to Teberda.

22. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 363–64.

23. Koval, *Kniga Spasenia*, vol. 2, *Riga/Jurmala*, 274–77.
24. YVA, M-33/457.
25. Sverdlov, *Dokumenty Obviniaiat, Kholocaust*, 55. Sverdlov provides army reports on the situation in regions liberated by the Red Army, passed on via the political echelons of the Soviet army. The documents are taken from Tsentralnyi Arkhiv RF.
26. Sverdlov, *Dokumenty Obviniaiat, Kholocaust*, 77–78.
27. Liakhovitskii, *Perezhivshie Katastrofu*, 142–43.
28. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 244.
29. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Lvov*, 737. The document appears in the book in the original German.
30. Juszkievich et al., *Those Who Helped*, 86–87.
31. There is no comprehensive research of the social background, political attitudes, or religious belief of the Righteous among the Nations.

34. *Attitudes of Churches toward German Administration*

1. The Old Believers split from the Russian Orthodox Church during the second half of the seventeenth century, in the wake of changes introduced by this church. The Old Believers stayed devoted to the old ways.
2. Picker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 7.
3. Picker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 424.
4. Alexeev, "Russian Orthodox Church," 50.
5. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 474–75.
6. Alexeev, "Russian Orthodox Church," 125–26, 138–39.
7. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 488–91; Alexeev, "Russian Orthodox Church," 94–97. Since Metropolitan Sergei did not meet the Germans' expectations, they decided to get rid of him. On April 19, 1944, on his way from Vilnius to Kaunas, his car was ambushed, and he and the car's other passengers were killed. The Germans blamed the partisans, but the attack had actually been carried out by the Sipo.
8. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*, 37.
9. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 88–89.
10. Dmitruk, *Swastika na Sutanakh*, 58–59; Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 8. Report number 13, dated July 5, 1941, notes, "On July 5, 1941 a nonpolitical and nonparty Ukrainian national newspaper appeared for the first time in Lvov. The first edition contains greetings by the city commandant General Renz, the Ukrainian-Greek Uniate Metropolitan Sheptytsky, and Mayor Poliansky. The Metropolitan Graf Sheptytsky, who is highly esteemed by all Ukrainians, will read a Pastoral Letter on July 6, 1941, the contents of which have been agreed upon."
11. Dmitruk, *Swastika na Sutanakh*, 75–76. On February 12, 1942, in return for this enthusiastic pro-German behavior, the Germans appointed Polykarp to "head the Autocephalous Church of the liberated Ukrainian territories."
12. Dmitruk, *Swastika na Sutanakh*, 76.
13. Dmitruk, *Swastika na Sutanakh*, 152–53.

14. Liakhovitskii, *Holocaust na Ukraine*, 102, 112, quotation from Ukrainian newspapers.

15. Z. Balevits, *Pravoslavianaia Tserkov Latvii*, 52–53.

16. Rozauskas et al., *Documents Accuse*, 88.

17. Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 42. Snaig had once been chief rabbi of the Lithuanian army.

18. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 54, 90.

19. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 262–64; Gar, *Jewish Kaunas*, 224. Tory and Gar write that Brizgys preached in the church against Germany's treatment of the Jews. They do not mention which church or when the sermon took place. The source of this information is a rumor spread throughout Kaunas that finally reached the ghetto. A Sipo situation report from Lithuania, dated April 30, 1943, referred to this rumor: "Propaganda from hostile sources on Bishop Brizgys's sermon, in which he allegedly protested against Germany's activity against the Jews and the Poles, and about the church's boycott of the [Lithuanian] police who participated in it, is . . . completely false."

20. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Lvov*, 604–5.

21. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 29. Kahane wrote that Sheptytsky promised to publish a "pastoral letter, in which he would warn the Ukrainians against acts of murder and theft." Such a missive was not published during those fateful months when many thousands of Jews were murdered, with the help of sections of the local population and Ukrainian police.

22. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 98.

23. Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans*, 245.

24. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 98.

25. Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans*, 245.

26. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 173–78. The missive is published in Hebrew and in German.

27. Prus, *Atamania UPA*, 57, 89, 93; Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy*, 257–63; John Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 173.

28. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 172–73; Pankivsky, *Roki Nimetskoi Okupatsi*, 225. Ukrainian nationalist circles, as well as Armstrong, 173, explain Sheptytsky's support for the "Galichina" division as his concern at the chaos that would follow the withdrawal of the German army from the Ukraine; in order to maintain law and order under such conditions, it would be imperative for a Ukrainian military force to remain behind. This claim is not plausible. It was obvious that no empty space would be left behind after a German retreat; the Soviet army would step in immediately.

29. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 135–39. Kahane details the monasteries in which shelter was given to Jews.

30. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 155. Kahane writes that Sheptytsky told him that he had written to Himmler, specifically demanding the removal of the Ukrainian police from the extermination of Jews. Such a letter is not mentioned in any other source, and it is unlikely that it was ever written.

31. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 243.

32. Dmitruk, *Swastika na Sutanakh*, 154.

33. Liakhovitskii, *Zheltaia Kniga*, 43.

34. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 489.
35. In *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 243, Spector writes of the Autocephalous Church in Volhynia: “Ukrainian priests were active in the local Ukrainian civil administration and helped in persecution of Jews. In a later stage, they joined the UPA and, among other things, participated in attacks against Jewish family camps.”
36. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 130, 223.
37. Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 16; Grossman, *The Underground*, 21. The convent was located in Kolonia Wilenska, 15 kilometers from Vilnius.
38. Yetta Shapiro-Rozenzweig, *We Have Been in Ponary, Too*, 28–33.
39. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews* 249–50.
40. Grynberg, *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, 336.
41. Neshamit, “Rescue in Lithuania,” 262–63. Ehrenburg and Grossman, in *The Black Book*, 381–82, describe how Father Paukstis saved the lives of twenty-five adults by hiding them in his church. They do not mention any missionary activity on the priest’s part.
42. Neshamit, “Rescue in Lithuania,” 314–15, note 49; testimony of Sara Elitsur, Lohamei Hagetaot Archives.
43. See chap. 12 about Kremenchug and chap. 17 about Chernovtsy.
44. Father Glagolev was the son of the priest Alexander Glagolev, a theology professor in Kiev and an expert on Judaism. Alexander Glagolev had been a defense witness at the Beilis trial, testifying that there are no customs in Judaism that conform to the blood libel.
45. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 374–75.

35. *The Individual, the Public, and Jewish Councils*

1. See chap. 7.
2. Rudashewski, *The Diary of a Boy from Vilnius*, 22–24.
3. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Brest-Litovsk*, 495–98.
4. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 190.
5. YVA, S-174/1946, pp. 16–19, 19–21, 30–32. The witness survived the Holocaust.
6. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 215.
7. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno’s Jewry*, 797.
8. Dan Zeitz, “Ghetto Minsk and Its History in Light of New Documentation,” 75.
9. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno’s Jewry*, 64–66.
10. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eishn*, 228.
11. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 83.
12. Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Shavli*, 41.
13. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 101, 119; Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 43.
14. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 147–48.
15. See chap. 11.
16. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 157–62, discusses the Sheinen in Lvov ghetto.
17. See chap. 33.
18. Eilati, *Crossing the River*, 183–84.
19. On attitudes of the local population toward the Jews, see chap. 32.

20. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 745; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 196–98.
21. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 159, 292.
22. See chap. 9 regarding orders of the military administration and Lohse's provisional orders.
23. See chap. 11. In Vilnius, the Jewish council was liquidated and most of its members were murdered even before the Jews were forced into the ghetto. On a single day, September 6, 1941, with the help of local Lithuanian police and in the absence of a Jewish council, the German administration moved more than 45,000 Jews into the Vilnius ghetto. In Kaunas and elsewhere, the time given for the transfer into the ghetto was over a week.
24. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Grodno*, 531–32.
25. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 117–19.
26. On housing in other ghettos, see Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 235–36; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 114–15; Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 34–35; Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Shavli*, 47.
27. USHMM, RG-53002 M, roll number 4.
28. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 101.
29. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eish*, 316.
30. Greenstein, *Survivor from Jubilee Square*, 36.
31. Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 130–31.
32. Balberiszsky, *Shtarker fun Eish*, 313–14.
33. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 234; *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Grodno*, 534.
34. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 191, 329.
35. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 146. On soup kitchens in other ghettos, see Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 311–12. In the Vilnius ghetto an average of 3,500 hot meals were distributed daily during the first half of 1942; two-thirds were free of charge. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 104; Shachan, *Burning Ice* (Transnistria), 209; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 136–37.
36. *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Grodno*, 335; Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 104.
37. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 160. On the activity of other sanitation teams, see Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 317, and Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 111.
38. According to Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 111, “Sanitation and hygiene in the ghetto were much better than in the city. The Germans admitted this on more than one occasion.” Yerushalmi, in *Pinkas Shavli*, 70, writes, “During the period of the illnesses that has passed, the ghetto suffered from less infectious diseases than other parts of the city.”
39. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 315.
40. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 70.
41. YVA, S-71/2050, 17.
42. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 109–10.
43. Dworzecki, *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 302; Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 111; Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 57–58.
44. Dworzecki, in *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 287, writes that “the natural mortality in the ghetto, within a population of almost twenty thousand, reached an average level of two

deaths a day. In prewar Jewish Vilnius, with its population of nearly sixty thousand, there was a death rate of three a day.”

45. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 112.

46. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 121.

47. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 312–14.

48. In the spring of 1940, the Department for Community and Welfare, belonging to the Interior Ministry of the General Government in Poland, officially recognized separate aid committees for Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. This was before the Americans entered the war and the establishment of the Jewish aid committee, and the fact that it was recognized by the General Government is due to the funds still being paid to the General Government by American organizations (including the JDC). The Americans insisted on 17 percent of their aid being given to Jews.

49. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 134–35.

50. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 113–14, 131.

51. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 319–20.

52. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 320–21. The ghetto theater put on 120 plays to audiences totaling 38,000 people.

53. Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 226.

54. Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 345.

55. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 320–21.

56. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 250–51.

57. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 222. Attempts were made in the German Jews' ghetto in Minsk to promote cultural activity, but the German authorities forbade them. See chap. 29.

58. On Rosenberg's "brown file," see chap. 9.

59. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 324.

60. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 524–24.

61. Kahane, *A Lvov Ghetto Diary*, 44–45.

62. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 222.

63. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 324; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 142–45.

64. Shachan, *Burning Ice*, 233–35.

65. On courts of law in the ghettos, see Kaunas—Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 476–80; Vilnius—Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 197, 200, 354–55, 377; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 119–20.

66. Yerushalmi, *Pinkas Shavli*, 163–65.

67. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 292–93.

68. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 331–32.

69. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 298–300; Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 136, 179, 184, 187–90.

70. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 283–84; Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 261; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 147–48; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 155; Jägendorf, *Jägendorf's Foundry*, 35–36.

71. Kruk, *The Last Days of Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 521–22; Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 355–56.

72. Tory, *Ghetto Everyday*, 539–40.

73. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 169–70; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 151–52.

74. See chap. 23.
75. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 149.
76. On the Jewish council–underground relations, see chap. 36.
77. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 238; Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 166; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 125; Tamir, *Book of Testimonies and Memorial for the Pinsk and Karlin Communities*, B:337.
78. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 126–27.
79. Garfunkel, *Destruction of Kovno's Jewry*, 180–81; see also chap. 23.
80. Baron and Levin, *History of an Underground*, 355.
81. See chap. 18 for a description of the events in Oshmiana.
82. See chap. 36 on Glasman and other policemen in the underground movement.
83. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 132–33; Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 139.

36. Jewish Armed Underground in the Ghettos

1. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 46–54; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 140–41; testimonies of underground members Rosa Lipska, YVA, 033/2687, and Silva Gebeliev-Astshinska, YVA, 033/2688.
2. Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 141–42, 145, 150; Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 95–96.
3. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 55–56, 86, 88–89; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 145–46; YVA, 033/2690, 5.
4. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 117–22; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 152–55.
5. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 189, 324.
6. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 2, 339–41.
7. Smolar, *Soviet Jews*, 115, 128, 131; Cholawski, *Hurricane*, 148–49, 151.
8. On the Minsk ghetto action, see chap. 18; also see there the letter from Kube to Lohse dated July 31, 1942, headed: “Fighting the Partisans and the Anti-Jewish Action in Generalbezirk Belorussia.”
9. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 226–30.
10. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 221–26. The first connection from Warsaw to Vilnius came via the Pole Henrik Grabovski. In April 1942 the sisters Sara and Ruzhka Zilber set off on a mission from Vilnius to Bialystock with Shlomo Antin. The group had to pass on the testimonies of people who had escaped from Panerai and a manifesto from the underground in Vilnius to the inhabitants of the other ghettos, calling on them to take up arms. The members of this delegation were arrested at the railway station in Malkinia and executed. The last messenger between the ghettos was a Polish woman, Irena Adamovich, who came from Warsaw to Vilnius in late June 1942.
11. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 231–38. On their way from Vilnius to Bialystock, Mordechai Tennenbaum-Tamarof and his comrades were helped by Antony Schmidt, a German army sergeant, who placed at their disposal a military vehicle. Schmidt did this as a humanist and as a friend to the Jews. He was arrested, court-martialed, and executed on April 13, 1942 for helping Jews. For his deeds, Schmidt was recognized as a Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem. Tennenbaum-Tamarof commanded the underground in the Bialystock ghetto and fell in the revolt there during the second half of August 1943.

12. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 239–41, 263–66.
13. Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 94, 100–101.
14. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 374.
15. Testimony of Abba Kovner, YVA, K-3405–291, 7–8; Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 93.
16. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 249–50.
17. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 375–66; Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 135–37.
18. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 377–82.
19. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 387–95.
20. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 395–98.
21. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 409–10.
22. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 410–16.
23. Levin, *Fighting Back*, 131–32; Y. Oliesky et al., *Haim Yelin, the Ghetto Fighter and Writer*, 25–27; Endlin, *In the Ways of Guerrilla Fighting*, 72.
24. Levin, *Fighting Back*, 133–34, 167; Faitelson, *The Truth*, 261.
25. Levin, *Fighting Back*, 134–35; Endlin, *In the Ways of Guerrilla Fighting*, 89–91; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 2:444.
26. Faitelson, *The Truth*, 100; Endlin, *In the Ways of Guerrilla Fighting*, 89–91.
27. Endlin, *In the Ways of Guerrilla Fighting*, 93–109. Endlin was among those sent to Augustova; Faitelson, *The Truth*, 100, 109.
28. Endlin, *In the Ways of Guerrilla Fighting*, 122–27, 175; Levin, *Fighting Back*, 136–38.
29. YVA, M-33/1052, 12, Soviet document that deals with the Riga ghetto; Dov Levin, *Fighting Back*, 170–71.
30. Levin, *Fighting Back*, 175–76.
31. YVA, M-33/1038, a collection of German documents including reports by the agent who provided the information and a record of the interrogation of the wounded prisoners and others who were arrested, including Pismanov. Documents are in GARF, Fond 7021, Opis 93, Delo 3785.
32. YVA, M-33/9038; Levin, *Fighting Back*, 183–84.
33. Lange's order dated October 30, 1942, YVA, M-33/1038; Levin, *Fighting Back*, 187–88.
34. Birman, "Ghetto Bialystok," B. 289–90, a document titled: "To My Dear Friends, Wherever They Are, There." Zipora Birman died in August 1943 during the uprising in the Bialystok ghetto: Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 234–35. The Martsikonys forests are northeast of Grodno.
35. Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same*, 236–38.
36. Eliezer Lidovsky, "Resistance Organization," in Stein, *The Book of Baranovich*, 469–71; Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 119.
37. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 124, 149, 178–81; Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 492–93.
38. Levin, *In the Forests of Revenge*, 66–67.
39. Levin, *In the Forests of Revenge*, 62–63, 72–74; Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 140–41; *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 3:670.

40. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 122, 132, 167; Sara Shner-Nishamit, *The 51st Brigade*, 38, 41, 56–67, 65–66. Shner-Nishamit quotes Pavel Proniagin (*U Samoi Granitsi*, 6), who wrote about the weapons, radio, and other equipment that he received from the underground in Slonim.

41. YVA, TR-18–808, 209. “Bandits” is what the Germans called the partisans.

42. Nuremberg Documents, NO-2027.

43. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 153, 173–74, 223, 248; Tamir, *Book of Testimonies and Memorial for the Pinsk and Karlin Communities*, B:341–43, 349–50.

44. On the Ukrainiska Povstanska Armia (UPA), see chap. 24.

45. Yones (*Smoke in the Sand*, 235, 237) described a small group led by Dr. Boris Fliskin that made it to the Carpathians and joined the partisans. He also mentioned a group led by a Jewish police officer, Goldberg, that joined the partisans.

46. Nuremberg Documents, L-18.

47. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 243.

48. Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 352; *Encyclopedia of the Diaspora: Ternopol*, 413.

49. David Stockfisch, *The Book of Nesvizh*, 419; Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 186–91.

50. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 191–93; Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 478–80.

51. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 118, 122–24, 135–37; Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 374–80; Herling, *Story of a Jewish Fighter*, 52–59.

52. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 137, 216; Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 280–82.

53. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 117, 123, 131, 144; Moshe Shutan, *Ghetto and Forest*, 25–26; Arad, *The Partisan*, 67–72. The prisoners were Gershon Back, who was wounded, and Reuven Maidziolski, who fired the shot.

54. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 153, 248; Arad, *The Partisan*, 76–85; Shutan, *Ghetto and Forest*, 38–41, 45–46.

55. Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 118, 134, 154, 178, 218–20; Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 480–86. After the action, the Germans arrested Rufeisen and accused him of informing the Jews. His Jewishness was revealed during his interrogation. He managed to escape and find shelter in a monastery, where he stayed for sixteen months. When the search for him became too intense, he escaped to the forests. The partisans accused him of being a German spy, and only the intervention of some Jews from Mir saved him from execution. Rufeisen adopted Christianity after the war, but he identified himself as a Jew. He emigrated to Israel and lived the rest of his life in a monastery. He died in 1998.

56. TSGAOR LATSSR, Fond R-70, Opis 6, Delo 80. Information relating to the Druzhina Verbandes refer to the battalion of German collaborators, which consisted mainly of Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians, former POWs, involved in antipartisan warfare. Being in the region of the township of Dokshytse, the battalion, under the command of Colonel Radionov, turned against the German forces that came from Globukoie, killed dozens of them, and joined the partisans.

57. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 180–82; Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 492.

58. Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 477–78; Cholawski, *On the Banks*, 193–98.

59. Zuckerman and Bassok, *Book of the Ghetto Wars*, 488–89; Spector, *Holocaust of Volhynian Jews* 214–17.
60. Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Black Book*, 26.
61. Platonov et al., *V Nepokorennom Minske*, 7, 50, 209.
62. Shapiro and Averbukh, *Ocherki Evreiskogo Geroizma*, 97–101.
63. Berenshtein and Elisavetskii, *Evrei Geroi Soprotivleniia*, 30–32; Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:452. The number of “dozens (decyatki) of soldiers, officers, collaborators” exterminated by Markusidze, as mentioned in the document dated August 15, 1946, seems an exaggeration as in many Soviet documents in relation to numbers.
64. Yurchuk, *Sovetskaia Ukraina*, 1:435–37; Berenshtein and Elisavetskii, *Evrei Geroi Soprotivleniia*, 36–37.
65. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 133, 232.
66. YVA, M-33/315. The Jews were David Karsnoshtein, Ilya Zussovsky, Shaya Feldman, Abraham Buchhalter, Zhenia Forman, Frieda Khayat, Hariton Levinson, and Dionisii Shemberg.
67. Arad et al., *Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 133, 362.
68. On Aktion 1005, see chap. 26.
69. *Sovietish Heimland* 6 (1977): 110–11. This is a Yiddish-language newspaper in the Soviet Union.
70. *Sovietish Heimland*, 6 (1977): 162–69; YVA, TR-10/761.
71. Baron and Levin, *History of an Underground*, 162–69; Faitelson, *The Truth*, 199–212.
72. TSGA LitSSR, Fond 44, Opis 1, Delo 61.
73. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 444–45; Sutzkever, *Vilnius Ghetto*, 198–99.

37. *Jews in Forests and the Partisan Movement*

1. I. Klimenko, ed., *Voina Narodnaia*, 53.
2. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otenchestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 27.
3. GARF 69-1-1067, 241–42.
4. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 386–87.
5. Atlas had arrived in the township of Kozlowschina, north of Slonim, in 1939 as a refugee from Poland. As a physician, he worked in the region’s rural districts and got to know many of the local inhabitants.
6. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 343–56; Bornshtein, *Dr. Atlas’s Company*, 61–67.
7. Bornshtein, *Dr. Atlas’s Company*, 111–12.
8. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 396–400.
9. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 900, 907; Turonek, *Bialorus*, 152.
10. Manaenkov, *Partizanskie Formirovania*, 149.
11. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 80, 108–10, 113.
12. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 124–25.
13. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 139, 125.
14. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 159–63; Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 318–19.

15. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 192–97; Manaenkov, *Partizanskie Formirovania*, 608–9.
16. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 174–75. During August and September 1942, German forces carried out a large operation against the partisans in extensive areas of Generalkommissariat Belorussia, known as Operation Sumpffieber.
17. Shner-Neshamit, *51st Brigade*, 175–76, 181.
18. Gefen et al., *Jewish Partisans Book*, 390.
19. Kalchheim, *With Proud Bearing*, 18–19; Korchak, *Flames in the Ashes*, 229–30; Haim Lazar, *Destruction and Revolt*, 213–14.
20. Kalchheim, *With Proud Bearing*, 19–20, 191–92; Shutan, *Ghetto and Forest*, 188–89.
21. Kalchheim, *With Proud Bearing*, 70–71.
22. The manhunt coined by the Germans “Fritz” took place between September 24 and October 10, 1943.
23. On the Jewish units in Rudniki forest, see Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 454–60.
24. Partiinyi Arkhiv TSK KP Belorusii, Fond 3599, Opis 4, Delo 272, 10–11.

38. *Blood Account*

1. On May 15, 1944, 875 Jews were brought from France to the Ninth Fort in Kaunas and murdered there.
2. See chap. 27.
3. These statistics are based on the following assumption:

The Minsk district, home to nearly 120,000 Jews, was taken during the first seven to ten days of the war. Between 95,000 and 100,000 Jews remained under occupation. On the eve of the war, almost 160,000 Jews lived in the Vitebsk and Mogilev districts. These districts were taken by the end of July 1941. Between 100,000 and 110,000 Jews remained under German occupation.

Over 100,000 Jews lived in Gomel and Polesie when these provinces were taken in August 1941. Some 30,000 remained under occupation.
4. These statistics are based on the following assumptions:
 - a. Some 440,000 Jews lived in the provinces of Zhitomir, Kamenets-Podolski, Vinitsa, western regions of the province of Kiev (without the city of Kiev), which were occupied by late July 1941. Of these 260,000 to 275,000 Jews remained under occupation.
 - b. Some 580,000 Jews lived in the provinces of Poltava, Kiev, Nikolaev, Dnepropetrovsk, Kirovograd, Chernigov, and Odessa (without the city of Odessa), which were occupied in August and September 1941. Of these, between 225,000 and 235,000 Jews remained under German occupation.
 - c. Some 265,000 Jews lived in the provinces of Zaporozhe, Sumy, Kharkov, and Stalino, which were occupied in October and November 1941. Of these, some 80,000 remained under occupation.

- d. The city of Odessa, which fell to the Germans in October 1941, had a prewar Jewish population of over 200,000. The number grew with the arrival of Jewish refugees from Bessarabia and elsewhere. Of these, about 105,000 Jews remained under German occupation.
- e. Some 20,000 Jews lived in the province of Voroshilovgrad, which fell to the Germans in July 1942. Some 5,000 remained under occupation.
5. On the rescue of several hundred Jews in the Soviet army's winter campaign, see chap. 13.
6. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 101.
7. Levin, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lithuania*, 41–42, 314.
8. See chap. 37.
9. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Eastern Galicia*, 46, 99, 171, 251, 376.

Epilogue

1. On Soviet attitudes toward Nazi Germany up to the outbreak of World War II and the Ribbentrop–Molotov treaty, see chap. 3.
2. Govrin, *Jewish Factor*, 82, 83–84.
3. Molotov's speech on October 31, 1939, in which he presented this line in Soviet policy, was published the following day in *Pravda*.
4. Anatoli (Kuznetsov), *Babi Yar*, 103.
5. Tsentralnyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rossii, inventory 32–11302–26, 167, 223–24.
6. Tsentralnyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rossii, inventory 32–11302–25, 64; inventory 32–11302–39, 33–34; inventory 32–11302–37, 124; inventory 32–11302–29, 192.
7. Zverstva Germanskikh Fashistov, Ogiz Politizdat, 1941. The name of the editor or the place of publication are not mentioned.
8. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 23. The book contains thirty-three of Stalin's wartime speeches and orders of the day.
9. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 50–52.
10. Nuremberg Documents, SSSR-051.
11. *Dokumenty Obviniaiat*, 1:40, 43.
12. *Dokumenty Obviniaiat*, 1:26.
13. Schwartz, *Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union*, 125–26.
14. Soobshchenia Chrezvychainoi Gosudarstvennoi Komissii, Moscow, 1944, 4–10. No editor is mentioned.
15. Liuks, "Evreiski Vopros v Politike Stalina," *Voprosy Istorii*, July 1999, 44. *Voprosy Istorii* was a monthly publication. Its name means "historical problems."
16. *Pravda*, March 1, 1944.
17. *Pravda*, July 14, 1944.
18. *Pravda*, September 20, 1944.
19. *Pravda*, December 23, 1944.
20. *Pravda*, December 20, 1944.

21. *Pravda*, April 5, 1945.

22. *Pravda* reported on the trial on July 15–19, 1943, including testimonies and confessions of the accused.

23. *Pravda* reported on the trial on December 16–20, 1943, including testimonies and confessions of the accused.

24. *Pravda*, December 16–19, 1945, and December 27–31, 1945.

25. A copy of the “Black Book” was smuggled out of the Soviet Union and reached the Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem in 1965. The original book (in Russian) was published by Yad Vashem in 1980. Since then it has been published in English, German, and other languages.

26. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was established in April 1942 under the leadership of Salomon Michoils. The Soviet regime’s objective in establishing the committee was for the committee to spread propaganda among world Jewry, especially in the United States, in order to obtain political, military, and economic aid for the Soviet Union in its war against Nazi Germany. Parallel to this activity, the committee became the sounding board of the Soviet Jews, who saw in it a Jewish leadership capable of dealing with their problems, especially expressions of anti-Semitism. The committee took these problems to the country’s leadership, which aroused the anger of the Soviet leaders. Once the war was over, the Soviet regime had no need for the committee. Solomon Mikhoels was murdered in Minsk in January 1948 on Stalin’s orders. The murder was made to look like a traffic accident. As part of Stalin’s anti-Jewish crusade, the committee’s fourteen members were arrested at the end of 1948, accused of Jewish nationalistic activity and espionage on behalf of the West. They were interrogated and tortured, after which thirteen of them were secretly executed in August 1952.

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